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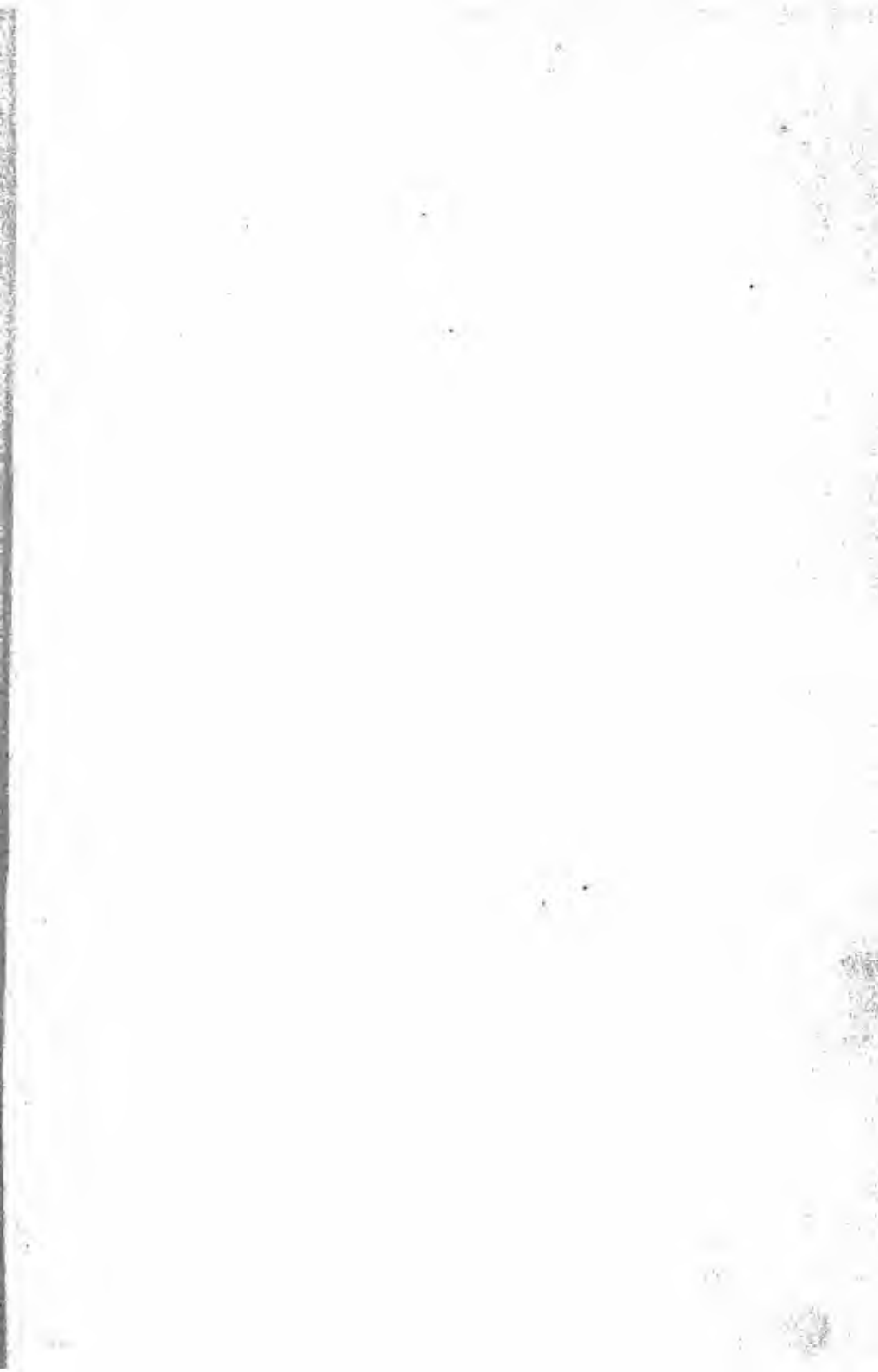
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# THE UPANISHADS A SECOND SELECTION

*Śvetāśvatara, Praśna, and Māndukya  
with Gaudapāda's Kārikā*

Translated from the Sanskrit with an Introduction embodying a study of Hindu Ethics, and with Notes and Explanations based on the Commentary of Śri Śaṅkarāchārya, the great Eighth-century Philosopher and Saint of India

by

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA



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## PREFACE

THE PRESENT VOLUME of the Upanishads contains translations of the *Śvetāśvatara*, *Praśna*, and *Māndukya*. The first volume of the Upanishads, containing translations of the *Katha*, *Īśa*, *Kena*, and *Mundaka*, was published in New York in 1949. An English edition appeared in 1951.

God willing, I plan to translate four additional Upanishads, namely, the *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Bṛihadāranyaka*, and *Chhāndogya*, in two further volumes, and thus present to the English-speaking public the eleven major Upanishads which form the source-books of the Hindu philosophical and religious culture.

The introduction to the present volume, entitled "Hindu Ethics," is intended to supplement the introduction to the first volume, embodying a general survey, the metaphysics, and the psychology of the Upanishads. In preparing it I have gathered materials from *The Ethics of the Hindus* by S. K. Maitra (Calcutta University Press, 1925) and *Essentials of Indian Philosophy* by M. Hiriyanna (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1949). It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to them both. It is also a pleasure to express my gratitude to Mr. Joseph Campbell for his kindness in reading the manuscript and making many valuable suggestions.

Thanks to the advance of science and technology, peoples that only a short while ago appeared inaccessible to one another are becoming close neighbours. An insatiable urge for knowledge is impelling men to study the heritage of cultures other than their own. The daring investigations of the Hindu mind into the transcendental realm of the Spirit are known to reflective people of the West and respected by them. Books of varying degrees of authenticity are being published on the subject. The time is now ripe for serious Western students to go to the very source of Hindu philosophical thought. This is perhaps some justification for publishing a new translation of the Upanishads and explaining them in the light of the commentaries of one of the greatest Hindu philosophers and sages.

NIKHILANANDA

Thousand Island Park, N. Y.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ai. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
<i>B. G.</i>	. . .	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>
<i>Bh.</i>	. . .	<i>Bhāgavatam</i>
<i>Br. Su.</i>	. . .	<i>Brahma Sutras</i>
<i>Br. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad</i>
<i>Chh. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Chhāndogya Upanishad</i>
<i>Is. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Īśa Upanishad</i>
<i>Ka. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Katha Upanishad</i>
<i>Kau. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Kaushitaki Upanishad</i>
<i>Ke. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
<i>Mā. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Māndukya Upanishad</i>
<i>Mā. Up. Gau. Kā.</i>	. . .	<i>Māndukya Upanishad, Gauḍapāda Kārikā</i>
<i>Mu. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
<i>Pr. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Praśna Upanishad</i>
<i>Ri.</i>	. . .	<i>Rig-Veda</i>
<i>Sām. Kā.</i>	. . .	<i>Sāmkhya Kārikā</i>
<i>Sām. Su.</i>	. . .	<i>Sāmkhya Sutras</i>
<i>Śvet. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upanishad</i>
<i>Tai. Up.</i>	. . .	<i>Taittirīya Upanishad</i>
<i>Yog. Su.</i>	. . .	<i>Yoga Sutras</i>

*Note:* References to *Self-Knowledge* are to the translation by Swami Nikhilananda, published in 1946 by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York. References to *The Upanishads* Vol. I are to the first volume of the present series of translations by the same author, published in 1949 by Harper & Brothers, New York.

## NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

a	has the sound of o in <i>come</i> .
ā	" " " " <i>a</i> in <i>far</i> .
e	" " " " <i>e</i> in <i>bed</i> .
i	" " " " <i>ee</i> in <i>feel</i> .
o	" " " " <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
u	" " " " <i>u</i> in <i>full</i> .
ai, ay	" " " " <i>oy</i> in <i>boy</i> .
au	" " " " <i>o</i> pronounced deep in the throat.
ch	" " " " <i>ch</i> in <i>church</i> .
ḍ	" " " " hard <i>d</i> in English.
g	" " " " <i>g</i> in <i>god</i> .
jñ	" " " " hard <i>gy</i> in English.
ś	" " " " <i>sh</i> in <i>shut</i> .

sh may be pronounced as in English.

t and d are soft as in French.

th has the sound of *t-h* in *boat-house*.

Other consonants appearing in the transliterations may be pronounced as in English.

## HINDU ETHICS

HINDU ETHICAL DOCTRINES are implicit in Hindu metaphysics. The practice of certain ethical disciplines by all students of metaphysics is presupposed. Without such disciplines metaphysical experience would not be possible. Most of the religious systems of India enjoin upon their devotees the observance of moral laws as long as they live. Non-dualism, it is true, holds that the perfect man is no longer bound by such laws. He is not affected by good or evil. But such a statement, often misunderstood, is really meant as a glorification (*arthavāda*) of the state of perfection. Though the Hindu scriptures praise Knowledge in this manner, they certainly do not mean that the perfect man is free to commit sin. That is utterly impossible for him. In order to qualify himself for perfection an aspirant must first of all completely eradicate all evil tendencies. While absorbed in ecstasy a perfect man remains oblivious of the world and moral law; when not thus absorbed he devotes himself to the welfare of his fellow men.

Hindu philosophers have discussed ethics both from the subjective and from the objective standpoint. Subjective ethics is related to individual discipline. Its purpose is the purification of the mind (*chittaśuddhi*) and the consequent deepening of the inner life. It culminates in the realization of the Highest Good, which transcends and fulfils all relative values. This is the ethical standpoint of Śaṅkarāchārya, Patanjali, Rāmānuja, and the Buddhist philosophers. Though they hold different views about the ultimate meaning of Reality, yet all are unanimously agreed that Reality is beyond the ordinary categories of good and evil.

Objective ethics deals with social welfare. It is based upon the Hindu conception of duties (*dharma*) determined by a man's position in society and his stage of life (*varṇāśramadharmā*), and also upon certain universal duties (*sādhāranadharmā*) common to all human beings. But objective ethics is not an end in itself. Ultimately it helps the individual to attain the Knowledge of Ātman or of God. All through Hindu ethics, both in its original formulation and in its later develop-



ments, the subjective value of action has been stressed. The reasons for this emphasis will be discussed later.

The ethical theories of the Hindus are determined by certain metaphysical concepts laid down in the Upanishads, which contain the wisdom of the Vedas, the highest authority of the Hindus in all matters pertaining to their religion and philosophy. Therefore we shall first consider the ethics of the Upanishads.

According to the general Upanishadic view the value of an action is to be judged by the degree of personal sacrifice involved. An action is judged meritorious if it involves a denial of personal comfort (*tapas*) together with renunciation (*nyāsa*) on the doer's part, though the action in itself may not be conducive to the immediate well-being of others.

But the objective value of action is not denied. The *Chhândogya Upanishad* (III. 17.) describes life as a sacrifice (*yajna*) which is to be performed by the advanced soul without any external ceremonies. In this sacrifice the gifts (which must accompany a sacrifice) are enumerated as austerities (*tapas*), liberality (*dānam*), righteousness (*ārjavam*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), and truthfulness (*satyavachanam*). A good action is thus extolled in the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* (9): "As the scent is wafted afar from a tree laden with flowers, so also is wafted afar the scent of a good deed." Wicked actions are universally condemned. Self-Knowledge is denied to him, says the *Katha Upanishad* (I. ii. 24.), "who has not first turned away from wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, and whose mind is not at peace." According to the *Chhândogya Upanishad* (V. x. 9.) dire consequences overtake a man "who steals gold, who drinks spirits, who dishonours his teacher's bed, who kills a brāhmin, and as a fifth, who associates with men guilty of any of the above four sins." The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (I. 9.) enumerates the following twelve duties, each of which is to be accompanied by the study and the teaching of the Vedas: right dealing and truthfulness, austerities, self-restraint, and tranquillity; (and as duties of a householder) feeding the sacred fire and the daily obligatory sacrifice (*agnihotram*), hospitality and courtesy, and duties to wives, children, and grandchildren.

The general moral tone of the people in Upanishadic times is indicated in the *Chhândogya Upanishad* (V. xi. 5.) by the following statement of King Aśvapati Kaikeya: "In my kingdom there is no

thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without an altar in his house, no ignorant person, no adulterer, much less an adulteress."

As stated above, Hindu ethics is primarily concerned with self-discipline leading to the liberation of the individual. The general trend of Indian philosophical thought can be summed up in the words of the Bhagavad Gītā (VI. 5-6.): "Let a man be lifted up by his own self; let him not lower himself; for he himself is his friend, and he himself is his enemy. To him who has conquered himself by himself, his own self is a friend, but to him who has not conquered himself, his own self is hostile, like an external enemy." The chief disciplines for subduing the lower self are austerity (tapas) and renunciation (nyāsa).

From the time of the Rig-Veda down to that of Ramakrishna, the practice of austerities has been accepted in India as an effective discipline for self-control, for curbing man's selfish natural impulses. By this practice Hindu ascetics acquired superhuman and supernatural powers which exalted them far above the world of men, nay, even above the world of the gods. Through self-control and concentration they penetrated into the mysteries of nature and the universe and acquired the wisdom that is their unique contribution to the world. Later on, however, asceticism was sometimes abused with the selfish aim of exciting wonder or of securing personal profit and was thus deprived of its original significance.

In the earlier part of the Vedas one reads that the Creator God practised austerities (tapas) in order to prepare Himself for the task of creation. Everything that is great in the universe is created through the power of tapas. According to a Vedic myth the four first-created men renounced the world immediately after their birth, to practise austerities. Since the universe could not be perpetuated by such men, the Lord created others with worldly tendencies.

The *Katha Upanishad* (II. i. 1.) states that the sense-organs are created with an inclination to material pleasures and that that is why embodied souls are entangled in this phenomenal life of unceasing birth and death, but that calm sages turn their sense-organs inward in order to attain Immortality. The *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* (III. v. 1.) exhorts us, as conditions for liberation in Brahman, to renounce the yearning for offspring, wealth, and the heavenly worlds. The same *Upanishad* (II. iv. 1.) describes Yājñavalkya's renouncing of the world in search of Immortality. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (III. 2.) Bhṛigu is repeatedly asked by his father Varuna to seek Brahman by means of

tapas; for tapas is Brahman. The *Kena Upanishad* (IV. 8.) speaks of tapas as the foundation of the Knowledge of Brahman. The *Chhândogya Upanishad* (II. 23.), the *Mundaka Upanishad* (I. ii. 11.), and the *Praśna Upanishad* (I. 10.) prescribe austerities for anchorites, during the third stage of life, as the means for the soul's passage to a higher heaven after death. According to the *Maîtṛāyani Upanishad* (IV. 3.) it is impossible, without asceticism, to attain the Knowledge of the Self or to bring work to fruition. Mere mental austerities are not enough for the attainment of Self-Knowledge. That they must be accompanied by external signs is stated in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (III. ii. 4).

The *Katha Upanishad* (I. ii. 1-3.) does not allow any compromise between the ideal of pleasure and the ideal of the good; the two are sharply distinguished, like darkness and light. "He who chooses the pleasant misses the end." And again, "The fool chooses the pleasant out of greed and avarice."

The practice of austerities does not mean the mere mortification of the body or of the sense-organs. If these are weakened the spiritual goal cannot be achieved. The meaning of self-control is described in the *Katha Upanishad* (I. iii. 3-9.) through the illustration of the chariot. The body is compared to a chariot, the intellect or discriminative faculty to the charioteer, the mind to the reins, the senses to the horses, the sense-objects to the roads, and the embodied soul to the master of the chariot. The chariot can take the master to his destination only when it is well built, when the driver knows his way, and when the reins are strong, the horses firmly held in control, and the roads well chosen. The seeker of Liberation should possess a healthy body and vigorous organs, unfaltering determination, and an undistracted mind. His discrimination should guide his senses to choose only those objects which are helpful to Self-Knowledge. If, on the other hand, the body, the mind, or any other faculty is injured or suppressed, he cannot attain the goal; just as the rider cannot reach his destination if the chariot and the accessories mentioned above are not in good condition. The *Katha Upanishad* here emphasizes discrimination and will-power as two important elements in the practice of self-control. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (XVII. 6.) calls those people fools who "torture their bodily organs." It extols (VI. 17.) the man who is "temperate in his food and recreation, temperate in his exertion at work, temperate in sleep and waking."

Renunciation (*nyāsa*) is the other discipline for self-perfection. This is the basis of the Hindu conception of the *varṇāśramadharmā*, or the duties pertaining to the castes and the stages of life.

The word *āśrama* is derived from the root *śram*, which means "to toil" and conveys the idea of austerity. Each stage in life and position in society has its appropriate duty, the right performance of which requires self-control and austerity. Through the four stages of life a man learns progressive renunciation and gradually becomes purified of all earthly attachment. During the first stage he is a *brahmachārin*, or celibate student. For twelve years, according to the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (IV. x. 1.), or for a series of years (IV. iv. 5.), he dwells in the house of his teacher, studying the Vedas and tending the sacrificial fire. Reverence and obedience mark his relationship with the teacher. At the end of this period, when the student takes leave of the teacher, the latter, as described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (I. 11.), says to him, by way of admonition: "Speak the truth, do your duty, forsake not the study of the Vedas; after you have presented the appropriate gifts to the teacher, take care that the line of your race is not broken." He is further asked not to neglect his health and possessions, to honour father, mother, and guests, to be blameless in act and life, to honour superiors, to bestow alms in an appropriate manner, and in all doubtful cases to order himself according to the judgement of approved authorities.

The second stage is called *gārhasthya*, or the life of a householder. At this stage the aspirant marries, pursues the study of the Vedas, performs daily sacrifices, and leads a life of self-control. It is required of him to establish a family, beget children, and do his duties according to his position in society. The householder's life is the foundation of a healthy society.

At the approach of old age the householder relinquishes family duties and retires into the solitude of the forest for the contemplation of the deeper mysteries of life. He is still bound to perform ritualistic worship, but meditation now takes the place of concrete ceremonies.

The final stage of life's journey is reached when, after the completion of the third stage, a man renounces the world and becomes a *sannyāsin*. It is also said in the Upanishads that one can give up the world from any stage of life, whenever one feels dispassion for material things. A *sannyāsin* is a free soul, cultivating the virtues of chastity, poverty, truthfulness, and abstinence from doing injury to others. He

gives an assurance of fearlessness to all living beings. No longer bound by any social obligations, he is a living demonstration of the unreality of the world and the reality of the Spirit.

Every stage has its corresponding duties and responsibilities. It is the duty of the student to acquire knowledge, the duty of the householder to serve society according to his capability, the duty of the recluse to lead a life of contemplation, and the duty of the *sannyāsin* to lead a life of purity, freedom, and fearlessness. A *sannyāsin* is free from all worldly duties. He relinquishes them when he takes the vow of monasticism. He cultivates the Knowledge of Reality and constantly radiates that Knowledge. He is beyond all categorical imperatives; but no unethical action is possible for him. He is the very embodiment of truthfulness, goodness, and fearlessness. He no longer strives for ethical perfection; virtue embellishes all his actions. He devotes himself to the welfare of others without seeking any personal gain. Ethical disciplines prepare one for this highest consummation of human life.

Caste duties, which have an important social bearing, are described in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (XVIII. 42-44.) and also by the various Hindu lawgivers. They constitute the objective morality of the Hindus, that is to say, morality as represented in a code of external acts and requiring outward conformity. The duties relative to the first three stages of life are similarly described.

The duties obligatory for *brāhmins* are officiating at religious ceremonies and the study and teaching of the Vedas. The *brāhmins* live on gifts made by members of the other castes. The duties obligatory for the *kshattriya* or military caste are protecting people from external oppression, guaranteeing the peace and prosperity of the people through wise administration of justice, chastising the wicked, supporting the righteous, and never turning from an enemy on the battlefield. The duties of the *vaiśyas* are trade, agriculture, and the breeding and rearing of cattle. The *śūdra* caste should serve the three upper castes through manual labour, receiving protection from them in return.

The caste-system is based on men's admitted inequalities—physical, mental, and spiritual—at the moment of birth. These are the result of actions in previous births, and each is himself therefore responsible for his condition. He will attain a higher position in society by cheerfully discharging the duties of his present position.

The four castes are the four principal parts of society; their common welfare therefore depends upon the welfare of each. The higher caste must show gentleness and compassion to the lower. Mixed dining and



intermarriage were permitted among the castes in ancient India, and the caste rules were flexible. Ruthless competition was eliminated through the caste-system, and a harmonious relationship established. Furthermore, through the caste-system India recognized the superiority of knowledge over military valour, the power of wealth, and organized labour. It preserved the integrity of Hindu society during the long period of ruthless alien rule.

Objective morality, according to the Bhagavad Gitā, is determined by a man's position in caste. Moral conduct is relative to birth and position. It is called dharma, which is the law of inner growth determining a man's reaction to the outer world. The brāhmin, the king, the merchant, the labourer, and the world-renouncing monk must observe their respective dharmas and thus ensure the well-being of society as a whole. A man is warned to pursue his own dharma, however imperfect, and not to try to imitate another man's dharma, however perfect the latter may appear to be. In the Gitā (II. 31.) Arjuna was admonished to pursue his dharma on the battlefield for the preservation of the moral order. He had been born in a military caste; hence it was his duty to fight for the chastisement of the wicked and the protection of the righteous.

The faithful performance of duties purifies a man's heart and mind by removing selfish impulses. Thus he becomes entitled to contemplate profound spiritual truths. In the end, says the Lord, in the Bhagavad Gitā (XVIII. 66.), he should give up all social duties and come to Him alone for shelter. In communion with God a man finds the culmination of all relative values. Worldly duties prepare him for the fulfilment of his supreme duty, which is the realization of God.

Besides the objective duties based on the castes and stages of life, there are laid down the common duties of men, the sādharma, which are the foundation of the moral life. Manu, the lawgiver, enumerates these common duties as follows: steadfastness (dhairya), forgiveness (kshamā), good conduct (dama), nonappropriation or the avoidance of theft (chauryābhava), control of the senses (indriya-nigraha), wisdom (dhi), learning (vidyā), truthfulness (satya), and absence of anger (akrodha).

It will be readily seen that most of the duties mentioned here aim at individual perfection. As stated before, the aim of Hindu ethics is to enable a man ultimately to conquer his lower self and attain freedom from passion, desire, and attachment.

The great purpose of objective morality is to create an ideal society,

affording its members facilities for developing their highest potentialities. Such a society enables men to cultivate the subjective morality, which aims at the purification of the mind.

Equanimity of mind, detachment, and self-control are the necessary conditions for the practice of deep contemplation, through which one ultimately realizes the Highest Good. This Highest Good may be cosmic or acosmic, according to the metaphysical theories with which it is related. Śankarāchārya, as will be seen later, speaks of the Highest Good as transcendental or acosmic. Therefore, according to him, the highest man discards all moral standards, subjective or objective. But though he does not strive to be virtuous, virtues adorn him like jewels. According to Rāmānuja, an important interpreter of Vedānta, the moral virtues are not given up, but for the highest man acquire a new significance. In him the ego and good and evil do not mean the same things that we understand them to mean in our daily practical life.

A few words may be said here to explain why objective morality or social welfare has been relegated to a secondary position in Hindu ethics. It is individuals, after all, who constitute society. If individual perfection is emphasized, so the Hindu philosophers argued, social welfare will follow automatically. Secondly, Hindu society, in olden times, was prosperous. The people, as a rule, prized spiritual values. The ideal man in society was the brāhmin, who accepted the vow of voluntary simplicity and poverty. The general moral tone was high. Every man was expected to follow his own dharma, or duty. Men were generous and charitable. No great need was felt for organized charity, which even in European society became prominent only in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. And lastly, according to the dominant Hindu philosophical view, the empirical world is not ultimately real. All values here are impermanent. The pairs of opposites, such as good and evil and pain and pleasure, will always exist in the dual world. The sum total of human happiness and suffering remains constant. Hence moral laws have only an instrumental, and not an intrinsic, value. They show the way to freedom from the laws of the relative world. In the Hindu tradition the ideal society should enable its members, through proper discipline, to rid themselves of desires and attachment and ultimately become world-renouncing sannyāsins, who transcend all moral laws.

The ethics of the Hindus is based upon metaphysical theories which deal with the Highest Good and the supreme end of life. A common

feature of these theories is that the ultimate goal negates or transcends the empirical life. It is supra-moral. Śankarāchārya's doctrine of the ultimate goal completely negates the phenomenal life, whereas Rāmānuja relates the moral duties to devotion to God, whose grace alone bestows Liberation. But even in the latter instance the ordinary idea of duty is given up. The ethics of Śankara and Rāmānuja will be discussed later.

All Hindu philosophers, regardless of their conceptions of the supreme end of man, admit the empirical reality of the individual, endowed with volition, desire, will, conscience or consciousness of duty, emotion, etc. The goal of Hindu ethics is to train these faculties in such a way that they shall lead the individual to the realization of Moksha, or Liberation. Therefore all schools of philosophy have described the virtues and their opposites in detail. It is expected of the moral agent that he should follow the former and shun the latter. We propose to discuss the virtues and their opposites according to the classification of Nyāya and of Patanjali's system.

Vātsyāyana, in his commentary on the Nyāya aphorisms, classifies will as impious (pāpātmikā) and auspicious (śubhā). The impious will leads to unrighteousness (adharma), and the auspicious will, to righteousness (dharma). Righteousness, it is necessary to add, is conducive to the Highest Good, whereas unrighteousness produces evil. The purpose of ethics is to subdue the impious and to manifest the righteous will.

Unrighteousness may take three forms, namely, physical, verbal, and mental, depending upon the condition of its functioning. Physical unrighteousness manifests itself as cruelty (himsā), theft (steḥya), and sexual perversion (pratisiddha maithuna); verbal unrighteousness, as falsehood (mithyā), rudeness (katukti), insinuation (suchanā), and gossip (asambaddha); mental unrighteousness, as ill-will (paradroha), covetousness (paradravyābhipṣā), and irreverence (nāstikya). The above list covers both subjective and objective vices and gives a specific direction to the volitional life as a whole. It may be noted that even harsh words, which, unlike cruelty or ill-will, do no visible wrong to anybody, are classified as vicious.

Righteousness (dharma) also is threefold, namely, physical, verbal, and mental. Physical righteousness consists of charity (dāna), helping the distressed (paritrāna), and social service (paricharana). Verbal righteousness consists of truthfulness (satya), speech conducive to the



welfare of others (*hitavachana*), and gentleness of speech (*priyavachana*). And lastly, righteousness of the mind consists of kindness or tenderness (*dayā*), detachment (*asprihā*), and reverence (*śraddhā*). It may be noted that this list, too, covers both subjective and objective duties. The purpose of good speech is the ultimate good of others.

A Hindu philosopher broadly defines virtue as what is conducive to the welfare of others, and vice as what causes suffering to others.

Patanjali, the author of *Rāja-yoga*, describes the virtues that must be cultivated by spiritual aspirants seeking liberation from the bondage of matter. These virtues purge the mind of evil passions and form the steel-frame foundation of the spiritual life. They include non-injury (*ahimsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), abstention from theft (*asteya*), chastity or continence (*brahmacharya*), and detachment from material objects (*aparigraha*).

Non-injury is the basic moral duty and the mother of all virtues. It implies positive goodwill and kindness to all beings. One practising non-injury exercises self-restraint and self-sacrifice and abstains from greediness or inordinate desire. Non-injury also requires control of hate, which often impels one to acts of cruelty, and mental alertness, in the absence of which one may commit acts of greediness, hatred, and cruelty. Lastly, it includes gentleness, that is to say, abstention from harsh words. The other virtues, such as truthfulness and detachment, are to be practised to the extent that they do not clash with the highest of all virtues, non-injury. Mahatma Gandhi, as is well known, recognized non-violence as the basic virtue and applied it to the welfare of humanity.

Truthfulness is opposed to falsehood. It consists in the correspondence of thought and speech to the objective fact or event established by valid proof. Therefore one practising truthfulness must fulfil two conditions. First, he must ascertain the fact by such valid proof as direct perception, correct inference, and reliable testimony. Secondly, he must faithfully describe the fact, without any intentional deceit or unnecessary verbiage. Half-truths and evasions are to be treated as lies. But truthfulness, in order to be a virtue, must not hurt or injure others. Its purpose is the welfare of others. When such a purpose is not served, it is wise to remain silent. What is true must be good and what is good must be true. A Hindu injunction says: "Speak the truth, speak the pleasant, but never speak an unpleasant truth."

Abstention from theft implies that one must not unlawfully ap-

propriate another's property or harbour greediness. It also implies uprightness in thought, word, and deed. According to some commentators, this virtue condemns ownership or appropriation in every sense of the word; for the very idea of ownership is opposed to morality. Thus it really means absolute indifference to material advantages in life.

The practice of continence, highly extolled by all the philosophers and mystics of India, implies, besides the literal meaning of the vow, abstention from lewdness in thought, speech, and action through any of the sense-organs. Through the practice of this virtue, one develops the capacity for subtle spiritual perception.

The idea behind detachment from material objects is that their accumulation is generally tainted by cruelty or other blemishes. One can hardly acquire, much less hoard, wealth without some sort of deceit or injury to others.

According to Patanjali the virtues enumerated above are to be cultivated without any exception as to particular creatures, and also without any restrictions as to specific occasions or particular methods (*sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānām anabhidroha*). They are universal virtues and admit of no exceptions arising out of class, profession, place, or occasion. The morality laid down by Patanjali is quite different from the morality practised in society by an average person. The latter follows different moral standards: one for dealing with human beings, a second for animals, a third for his countrymen, a fourth for foreigners, and so on. Patanjali, in order to avoid the conflicts between the relative and the universal moral codes, lays down only the highest moral standard.

A few words may be said here about the conceptions of morality in Jainism and Buddhism, which, though influenced by Hindu philosophical thought, fall outside orthodox Hinduism.

The distinguishing feature of Jaina morality is that a moral action is determined by the subjective intention (*abhisandhi*) of the agent and not merely by the results of happiness or suffering. Moral actions are bad if they are impelled by impure thoughts in the agent, and good if impelled by pure thoughts. The virtues in their tangible forms are almost the same as those described by the Hindu philosophers mentioned above, with the exception that the Jainas place forgiveness (*kshamā*) at the top. The Jaina virtues aim more at self-culture than at social service, though in actual practice the Jainas of India are most active in alleviating the misery not only of afflicted men but also of

dumb animals and even insects. Nevertheless their motive is self-purification.

Buddhist philosophers show a great sensitivity about virtues and their opposites. They recognize subconscious morality and not merely the self-conscious morality of orthodox ethics. For instance, it is not merely manifest actions and words that are moral or immoral, but even dispositions of the mind. Thus unrighteousness begins to accumulate if a man resolves that from a certain date he will earn his living by plundering and killing other human beings, even though this resolution may be put into effect only after a long time. A fisherman, for instance, begins to accumulate the result of unrighteous action from the day he begins to weave a net with which fish will be caught at a future date. Likewise, the subjective act of a pious resolution may incline one's personality in the direction of righteousness even though the conscious action may appear much later. Furthermore, Buddhists speak of institutional morality, which is not generally found in other systems of ethics. The founder of an institution is responsible for the good and evil effects of the institution. For example, if a man establishes a temple in which animals will be sacrificed he is committing an immoral action.

As has been stated above, Indian ethics aims at the purification of the mind with a view to the attainment of personal liberation. Thus such virtues as non-violence, detachment, compassion, and reverence are highly prized ethical qualities with the Hindus. In contrast, the Greeks emphasized the social virtues. Two of the characteristic Greek virtues were justice and friendship—the former emphasizing proper regard for the rights of others and the latter being a social quality.

Ethics, comprising the rules of conduct either for self-purification or for social welfare, is not an end in itself. According to Hinduism, as already noted, it is a means to the experience of the transcendental life or the life of freedom. The different systems of Hindu philosophy conceive different ideals of freedom. According to Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, and Non-dualistic (Advaita) Vedānta freedom implies the total negation of the empirical life. Though the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophers conceive negation itself as the ultimate freedom, those of Sāṃkhya and Non-dualistic Vedānta describe freedom in terms of knowledge and bliss. According to Rāmānuja negation is only a step to the re-affirmation of experience in relation to the Godhead.

We shall now briefly discuss the metaphysical theories of the various Hindu philosophical systems.

According to Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, pain and pleasure—like intelligence, desire, aversion, conation, righteousness, unrighteousness, and predisposition due to past experience—do not belong to the essential nature of the self or ātman, though they are its specific qualities. Freedom is the "escape" (apavarga) from both pain and pleasure. It is a state of perfect repose bereft of consciousness. Since a man is eager to seek his own freedom, he should help others to achieve theirs. After the death of the body the liberated man is totally free of thought, feeling, and will, but before death he continues to exercise right knowledge, right volition, right will, and right feeling. Evil is due to the association of the self with the body and the mind. Though the physical body is destroyed at death, the self will assume another body in accordance with the law of rebirth. But the mind will always be in contact with the self. Freedom consists in the recognition of the fact that though the self is actually related to the body and the mind, that relationship is by no means essential to it. Right knowledge severs the relationship and ignorance creates it. Ignorance produces aversion and attachment and is the root cause of the life of the world, with its sorrows and fleeting joys. As the self is beyond pleasure and pain, so it is beyond the righteousness (dharma) and unrighteousness (adharma) which produce them. After the attainment of self-knowledge a man will continue to perform right action, which is free from self-interest and short-sightedness. The preliminary discipline for the realization of freedom is the practice of detachment, which is, after all, the intrinsic nature of the self. During this stage the moral virtues, especially control of selfish desires and impulses, are cultivated. This is followed by the attainment of the seriousness of mind necessary for acquiring the ultimate knowledge of truth through study and reflection. The last step consists in meditation (yoga) on the ultimate truth, which results in the direct experience of truth.

According to the systems of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, which rest on a common metaphysical foundation, individual selves (puruṣas) are innumerable, there being as many as there are living entities. In their true essence they are light and sentiency. They are desireless and actionless. Another fundamental category of the two systems is nature (prakṛiti), undifferentiated, non-dual, and insentient. Nature is, however, complex in the sense that it consists of three factors called guṇas.

These are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva*, roughly speaking, denotes what is pure and fine; *rajas*, what is active; and *tamas*, what is static and offers resistance. They have their psychological counterparts in calmness, passion, and inertia. By the proximity of the *purusha*, or the self-conscious entity, *prakriti* undergoes a transformation and becomes the variegated world. Intellect, ego, mind, sensory organs, motor organs, subtle elements, and gross elements are all modifications of nature. Their activity, due to the proximity of the *purusha*, is reflected in the *purusha*, which thus appears to experience pleasure and pain in the empirical world. This reflection, which is illusory in character, is the cause of the *purusha*'s bondage. There is a design in *prakriti*. It creates a desire in the *purusha* for the experience of material objects, furnishes the objects of enjoyment, and ultimately creates disgust for all material experiences, thus paving the way for its freedom. In short, *prakriti* helps the *purusha* to attain freedom.

Freedom, according to *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga*, consists in the *purusha*'s realizing aloofness or escape (*kaivalya*) from *prakriti* and its experiences. This puts an end to the suffering created by the illusory identification with nature. According to non-dualism the individual self, in a state of freedom, realizes its oneness with the Universal Soul, or *Brahman*, but according to the two systems under discussion, there is no such Absolute Self; these systems teach that the individual self comes to exist by itself through extrication from *prakriti*. It discovers its own pure light and consciousness. This interpretation is denied by *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika*, according to which consciousness is a specific quality produced in the self by conjunction with nature, or *prakriti*.

The disciplines prescribed by *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga* for the attainment of freedom are, in general, of the same nature as in other systems. They consist in the cultivation of detachment and meditation. Patanjali lays down eight accessories of *yoga*. The first two, *yama* and *niyama*, consist of non-injury, truthfulness, abstention from misappropriation of others' property, continence, the giving up of possessions, etc. These have already been discussed. They are followed by posture, the regulation of the breath, the withdrawal of the senses (*uparati*), the steadying of the mind (*dhāraṇā*), contemplation (*dhyāna*), and absorption (*samādhi*). Of these six, the first three aim at securing the control of the physical frame with a view to facilitating the control of the mind. The last three help to secure a gradual mastery of the restless mind. Patanjali mentions devotion to God as a help to meditation.



Sāmkhya is non-theistic; it does not accept a Creator God. The liberated soul, detached from prakṛiti, lives the life to which it has become accustomed, but it is free from "passion, pain, and guilt."

The philosophy of Purva-mīmāṃsā, like that of Vedānta, is based upon the revelation of the Vedas. It emphasizes, however, the ceremonial part of the Vedas and not the Upanishads. The very word *mīmāṃsā*, meaning investigation, suggests that the Vedas should not be accepted without reflection or reasoning. Jaimini is the great philosopher of Purva-mīmāṃsā.

According to this system the self, which is different in each body and which is eternal and all-pervading, consists of two elements: a spiritual and a non-spiritual. With respect to its spiritual part the self is the seer, that is to say, the witnessing subject of its experience, and also the object of the cognition "I am He." Knowledge is a process in the self. It undergoes a change in the knowing of objects. The process of knowing directly leads to the revelation or the manifestation of the self. With respect to its non-spiritual part it is subject to transformation in the form of cognition, pleasure, pain, etc. Pain and pleasure are not states of the mind, as in the Sāmkhya and Vedānta philosophies, but transformations of the non-spiritual part of the self. Purva-mīmāṃsā postulates a multiplicity of material ultimates underlying the world. The universe is without beginning or end. The theory of cycles is rejected. The individual entity may come into existence, grow, and decay, but the physical universe as a whole always exists. This system differs from materialistic philosophy in that it accepts spiritual values and posits the doctrine of karma and the survival of the soul. Its special feature is its emphasis on the ethical order of the universe. Purva-mīmāṃsā does not accept the idea of God, and hence divine grace has no place in its scheme of salvation.

The concepts of dharma and adharma play an important part in the philosophy of Jaimini. Dharma is what is prescribed by the Vedas to be a man's duty, and applies principally to religious ceremonies. Adharma is the opposite of dharma. But moral conduct is not excluded from dharma. It is, on the contrary, a necessary condition for the fruition of the practice of the Vedic ceremonies. The five obligatory Vedic duties include the study of the Vedas, the performance of sacrifices, the offering of oblations to ancestors, hospitality to guests, and the feeding of birds. The Vedas simply tell us that certain means produce certain ends—a knowledge which a man cannot acquire from any other source. But

the Vedas cannot create the desire in a man's mind to pursue the good and shun evil. According to the Prabhākara school of Purva-mimāṃsā, duties should be pursued for their own sake. This school defines the ultimate goal of man as the realization of the moral imperative as duty (*niyoga-siddhi*). The Vedas do not prescribe any reward but merely state what is to be done. It is not imperative that the right should produce a desirable result; the right may be right in itself. Work should be done from a sense of duty and not from the inclination of the mind. According to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, another important Purva-mimāṃsā philosopher, freedom consists in the dissolution of the individual's connexion with the empirical world, and not in the dissolution of the empirical world itself, as held by Śaṅkara. A man is connected with the world through his senses and their objects. Thus he is subject to pleasure, pain, and the like. Freedom is the cessation of this connexion and consequently is an escape from pleasure, pain, and the like. According to certain philosophers of this school there is a natural happiness of the self, which remains hidden during the state of bondage but which manifests itself during the state of freedom. This happiness of the self is experienced by the mind alone, without the instrumentality of the sense-organs.

The discipline for freedom is dharma, or right action, and not *jñāna*, or metaphysical knowledge. There is no room in this system for *san-nyāsa*, or absolute renunciation of the world. The ideal man leads an unselfish life, occupied with the performance of social and religious duties as taught or implied in the Vedas.

Non-dualistic Vedānta has been expounded by both Bhartṛprapancha and Śaṅkarācārya, who is generally known by the name of Śaṅkara. Bhartṛprapancha lived before Śaṅkara. According to him the selves and the physical universe, though finite and imperfect, are real. They are both identified with and different from Brahman. The three together constitute a unity in diversity. At the time of creation, Brahman evolves into the selves and the universe (*Brahma-parināmavāda*). At the end of the cycle these lie implicit in Brahman. The world and the individual selves have no existence independent of Brahman. The liberated soul retains its individuality, which, however, is transformed by its intimate knowledge of Brahman. The discipline for Liberation is a combination of moral and religious duties and philosophical knowledge. By means of the former an aspirant rids himself of selfish impulses, while the latter helps him to do away with ignorance, which veils the true Knowledge of Reality.

Śankara (A.D. 788-820) is the chief exponent of absolute non-dualism, which is the outstanding philosophical system of India. According to him the reality of diversity is not ultimate. This reality is admitted by the Vedas as a concession to the empirical mode of thought. Śankara teaches the ultimate unity of existence. But since unity is a correlative of diversity, he describes his system as non-dualism and not as monism. He does not teach a featureless or bare unity, which would be "pure nothing." He denies the many but does not affirm the monistic One. According to Śankara diversity is illusory (*mithyā*). The Real is what is eternal; the unreal is what is absolutely non-existent. Brahman is the only Reality. The universe is neither real nor unreal. That it is not immutable and eternal is apparent to all. At the same time it is not unreal in the sense that the "son of a barren woman" is unreal. Thus the universe is an illusory appearance, something psychologically given but not logically established. The universe is an appearance depending upon Brahman for its apparent reality. The familiar example given is that of the rope appearing as a snake. The snake depends upon the rope, and not the rope upon the snake. Likewise, the universe is dependent upon Brahman, and not Brahman upon the universe. The names and forms that constitute the universe are purely conventional.

The self (*jīva*) is also an illusory appearance of Brahman. But this appearance is of a different kind from the illusion of the universe. This is explained by the example of a white conch-shell appearing yellow when seen through a yellow glass. The Knowledge of Reality removes the universe altogether, revealing Brahman in its place; but the same Knowledge does not altogether do away with the *jīva*, but only with a certain aspect of it, namely, finitude. When the true nature of the rope is realized, the snake as such altogether disappears; but when the yellow glass is removed, the conch-shell, which formerly appeared yellow, now looks white, which is its true colour. The illumined person denies the world, while affirming the underlying reality of Brahman, which constitutes the reality of all diverse objects. Brahman appearing through the limiting adjuncts of the mind is the *jīva*. The individual soul looked at from the standpoint of the Absolute is Brahman. It is not altogether negated by true Knowledge; on the contrary, it is affirmed as Brahman. To sum up, Brahman is the sole Reality, which appears as both the objective universe and the individual self. With the Knowledge of Brahman, the self is not lost in It; the self only realizes that it has always been Brahman. This is the meaning of the identity of the *jīva* and Brahman.



Sankara does not admit the existence of any causality in Brahman, which is Pure Being, but says that causality operates only in the empirical sphere, in the realm of becoming. The universe is not a chaos but a cosmos. Brahman is its ground in the sense that the rope is the ground of the illusory snake. The appearance of the world does not effect any change in Brahman Itself. This view is known as *vivarta-vāda*, the "doctrine of false transformation or apparent change." (According to Sāmkhya-Yoga and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, change or transformation is real.) The cause of apparent change is *māyā*. It is a power, inscrutable to the finite mind, which inheres in Brahman and is responsible for the appearance of the universe and the individual self. The universe constantly changes; yet through these transformations something persists. These two facts give rise to the idea of unity in diversity. Sankara denies any relationship between these two entirely disparate entities. Yet an ignorant man establishes a relationship between them and states that the unchanging Brahman either creates the universe or transforms Itself into it. This is *māyā*. The same is true of the individual creature. No relationship is possible between the changing body and the unchanging spirit (*Ātman*). They are as opposed to each other as light and darkness. It is through ignorance that one establishes a relationship between them.

The Spirit, which is the underlying Reality behind the universe, is Brahman, or the non-dual Absolute. Whatever reality the world reveals is derived from It. Hence when a non-dualist negates the world, he only denies its existence when conceived as independent of Brahman. Brahman is devoid of both unity and diversity, which are the characteristic features of the world. It transcends all empirical attributes and is described in the Upanishads by the well-known formula *Neti, neti*—"Not this, not this." (*Br. Up.* II. iii. 6.) This Brahman is identical with the inmost spirit in the individual creature. It is not an abstraction. The reality of Brahman can no more be doubted or denied than can the reality of the individual. The very doubter or denier is Brahman.

The *jiva*, or individual creature, is a mixture of Self and non-Self, the latter comprising the mind, the senses, and the body. The non-Self is called *avidyā*, or nescience. The mixture of Self and non-Self is the result of a wrong identification, since the two cannot really be identified. This wrong identification is the cause of all our confusions and troubles in life. It creates the idea of ego. All our daily experiences

of life are based upon an erroneous mixture of truth and untruth. Liberation consists in overcoming this false identification and transcending the ego. When a man goes beyond the ego he truly knows himself. The Self in Its true character is the Witness, or Consciousness, and therefore is the same as Brahman. The Witness is involved in all empirical thought. The true Self cannot be known as an object; It is eternal Knowledge, without an object. Ordinary knowledge arises when the true Self functions, as a result of *avidyā*, through the mind and senses.

According to Non-dualistic Vedānta the goal of human life is liberation from ignorance, resulting not only in the destruction of all misery but in the attainment of positive Bliss. The Self is Knowledge, Reality, and Bliss. The empirical happiness derived from the contact of the senses is distinguished from the real or transcendental Bliss which is the very stuff of the Self. This Bliss always exists in the Self but is covered by ignorance. Therefore the real Bliss is not to be created but simply to be discovered. This discovery takes place through right knowledge. For its attainment the seeker must practise constant hearing (*śravaṇa*), reasoning (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*). Contemplation results in immediate experience. But certain disciplines, mostly ethical, are a prerequisite to the practice of contemplation. They include various duties of life, which are to be performed in the manner taught in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, that is, with no desire for external fruit, but with a view to removing all selfish impulses. For a beginner the life of quietism is condemned. It is only through the disinterested performance of duties that one rids oneself of egotistic tendencies, so firmly rooted in the dualistic life. Other disciplines are discrimination between the Real and the unreal, relinquishment of the unreal, control of the mind, control of the senses, faith, and strong yearning for Liberation from the bondage of the world. But ethical disciplines do not directly produce Liberation; they only generate in the seeker's mind the desire for Knowledge. Therefore morality is merely a remote or mediating cause; Knowledge alone can bring Liberation.

The illumined soul is called a *jīvanmukta*, or free soul. Though associated with the body, the illumined one knows that the Self is completely separate from the body. He leads a life of service to others (*sarvabhūtahiteratah*). But the basis of his service is the knowledge of the oneness of all. For this reason he works not under the constraint of obligation but through spontaneous love. Duty as such has no meaning

for the free soul, but he is never indifferent to the world. The life that Śaṅkarācārya himself led is an illustration of this attitude. At a period of great spiritual crisis in India he devoted himself to the reform of Hindu society. Besides being a unique philosopher, he was one of India's greatest social and religious reformers.

The ethics of Non-dualistic Vedānta is directly derived from its metaphysics, which has been briefly described above. It can be regarded from two standpoints: the ascetic and the positive. Let us consider first the ascetic aspect.

Under the influence of māyā, as already stated, the physical universe comes into existence, and by it the universe is sustained. Secondly, the same māyā is the cause of the delusion under whose influence the individual, or jīva, engages in various activities of life in order to enjoy happiness and shun misery. The jīva regards the objective environment, which includes other jīvas, as entirely distinct from itself. It develops love and hate for certain of these other jīvas, and remains indifferent toward the rest. Thus, as a consequence of māyā, the individual soul first forgets its true nature, secondly, holds the wrong belief that it is separate from others, and lastly, comes to see a physical and social environment to which it reacts in diverse ways. Suffering, which is the evil result of māyā, springs from the second of these consequences, namely, the wrong belief that the individual soul is separate from other living beings. For in deep sleep a man may forget his real nature, yet he does not then experience any suffering; furthermore, in the same deep sleep, the outside world exists, as attested by other waking creatures, but without causing any harm to the sleeper. Therefore the bitter effect of māyā is felt when the individual soul, under its influence, identifies itself with the body, mind, and senses, and creates the notion of I-consciousness (aham) or ego. It is this that brings the conflict between "I" and "you." Egoism is the source of all evil. Selfishness is sin, as has been declared by all religions. Hence a man seeking Liberation should first of all renounce the ego, that is to say, give up all private or personal interests. Thus the non-dualistic morality, in one of its phases, preaches the ascetic ideal of self-denial.

But all this is a sort of negative ethics and must be supplemented by another, a positive aspect. As stated before, māyā hides from us the ultimate Truth, which reveals man's identity with Brahman, as expressed in the Upanishadic statement: "That thou art"—*Tattvamasi* (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7*). Man is therefore more than the finite or

narrow self. He is really the Universal Self, though oblivious of this fact on account of a veil concealing his true nature. It is the duty of man to recognize and realize his oneness with Brahman. But an intellectual recognition is not enough; everyday action must be influenced. To be sure, this is a rare attainment. But every man searching for the nature of his relationship with others can be told that all individuals are, in essence, the same as Brahman. Men are not fundamentally different from one another. Consequently it is the duty of all to avoid discrimination between one man and another and to cultivate a feeling of kindness and love for all.

For the non-dualist this love extends to all living creatures and is not confined only to men. When a man is asked to love his neighbour he should also be told that every living being is his neighbour. This all-embracing attitude is based upon the belief that all living beings have souls, though all may not have reached the same state of spiritual growth. The universal love taught by non-dualism precludes not only all hatred, but also the attitude of indifference. It denies the anthropocentric view that man is the centre of creation and is alone endowed with a soul, just as astronomy long ago discarded the geocentric view of the universe. Universal love is based upon the fundamental oneness of all living beings. The reason advanced for such love is the unreal nature of the commonly felt difference between one sentient object and another, which difference is the result of *māyā*. Any expression of love that is not related to this oneness is but a reflection of true love; for whether one knows it or not, the unity of existence is the ultimate Truth.

It is commonly held by uncritical persons that the theory of *māyā* denies ethics: if the individual souls are unreal, then what room is there for the cultivation of a moral attitude? We have tried to show that the non-dualistic ethics implies both self-denial and self-affirmation. It should not be forgotten that what is denied is the narrow, apparent, and egotistic self. But the self that is affirmed is the real and universal Self. The aspirant, according to Non-dualistic Vedānta, should renounce actions undertaken solely for the purpose of enjoying personal benefits (*kāmyakarma*), but should adhere to the daily obligatory duties (*nityakarma*), animating them with unselfish love for all sentient beings.

Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017-1137) agrees with Śaṅkara in describing Moksha as a state of positive Bliss, but differs from him in certain im-

portant principles. First, Rāmānuja holds that the self is an individual entity and not one with Brahman. Secondly, the self is not pure consciousness, but a thinking subject, with consciousness as its essential attribute. Thirdly, the self, in the state of Moksha, does not lose its individuality by merging in Brahman, or the Godhead. Brahman, the self or jiva, and the physical world are three different entities, equally eternal, but at the same time inseparable from one another. The jiva and the universe may be described as the body of God, who is their Soul and animates them. They cannot exist without God. Rāmānuja's system is known as Viśiṣṭādvaita, often translated as "qualified non-dualism," which really implies the unity of the Godhead, holding within Itself the differentiations of the soul and the universe. In the state of Liberation the inseparable relationship between God, the soul, and the universe is recognized, the two latter realizing their entire dependence upon God.

Prakṛiti, or nature, is insentient, with sattva, rajas, and tamas as its attributes. It is entirely dependent upon God and is often described as His body or garment. The physical world evolves from prakṛiti under the guidance of God, who rules it, remaining within it, though separate from it. As long as the diverse physical objects exist, they are inseparable from nature.

The jiva, or individual self, is different from God but not independent of Him. Rāmānuja believes in a plurality of selves. They are coeval with God. The self is atomic and intelligent. Intelligence, which is an attribute of the soul, is eternal and all-pervading. But it can contract or expand, depending upon the unrighteous or righteous action that the self performs. The self is intrinsically happy but suffers from misery as a result of past wicked actions. There are three kinds of souls: some are eternally free, some have achieved freedom through self-discipline, and some are still in the process of transmigration.

God is the immanent principle in prakṛiti as well as in individual souls. Prakṛiti and individual souls are entirely subject to His control; they subserve His purpose. God, as Rāmānuja puts it, exists for Himself, whereas the souls and the universe exist for God. God, together with the souls and nature, is an organic whole, just as the human soul, together with the living cells and the body, is an organic unity. Being the essence of intelligence, God is self-revealing and free from defects and is the possessor of all auspicious qualities. Omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, He is all-merciful. By His grace man is redeemed.



Liberation, in Viśiṣṭādvaita, consists in the attainment of heaven or the world of God, who is called Nārāyaṇa. In heaven the liberated soul enjoys perfect Freedom and Bliss. There are two main practices for the attainment of Liberation. One is total self-surrender to God (prapatti) with complete trust in His power and mercy; the other is love of God (bhakti), which can be cultivated by means of certain disciplines. The first of these disciplines is called karma-yoga. One must perform one's duties according to one's position in life, completely surrendering the fruit to God. The main purpose of work is to please God. The most important duty, according to Rāmānuja, is to worship God through appropriate images, sacred formulas, and so on. The second discipline is the cultivation of jñāna, or knowledge, by which the seeker meditates on the relationship of the soul with God, and also its distinction from matter, with which it is at present associated through ignorance. The eternal dependence of the soul upon God is the unceasing theme of contemplation. But, unlike Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja teaches that self-knowledge is not in itself the goal of life; it is a necessary discipline for God-realization. The third discipline is bhakti-yoga, which means constant meditation on God. It is a loving meditation for its own sake, and not a blind faith. This meditation leads to a "firm recollection" (dhruvā smṛiti), characterized by a vivid and intense attachment to God, who is meditated upon. Through these three disciplines the devotee attains love of God. The actual goal is realized after the dissolution of the body. In the heavenly world the soul's intelligence becomes all-pervading and does not require the instrumentality of the sense-organs. It may be added that the chief discipline for Liberation is the practice of self-surrender to God (prapatti). Without total resignation of self-will, no one can earn divine grace, which alone leads to Liberation.

Rāmānuja does not insist on sannyāsa, or the renunciation of action, at any stage of spiritual progress. Duties, according to one's station, should be performed throughout the first three stages of life. As the aspirant makes progress, he more and more combines the knowledge of God with his work. Neglect of duty brings evil results and deprives one of God's grace. Thus a householder, too, can strive for and attain Liberation. The relinquishment of the obligations of a householder, however, may accelerate its attainment.

The principal exponent of the dualistic school of Vedānta is Madhva (A.D. 1199-1276). Like Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja, he too embraced the

monastic life and became known as purna prajna, or completely enlightened. He preached a theistic doctrine, identifying the Supreme God with Vishnu. His philosophy is pluralistic and realistic. Not only are individual souls distinct from one another and from matter; material objects also are so. Objects exist independent of knowledge. He claims to have derived his knowledge, like Śankara and Rāmānuja, from the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the *Brahma Sūtras*. Belief in God, according to Madhva, is based entirely on scriptural evidence, the unaided faculties of men being quite incompetent for the purpose of knowing the Ultimate Cause. Madhva speaks of five forms of difference (bheda), namely, the difference between God and souls, between souls and souls, between God and matter, between souls and matter, and lastly between one material object and another. But both souls and the universe are dependent upon God and are guided by His will. God is immanent in the world and controls it from within. It should be stated, however, that Madhva's system is not pluralistic in the ordinary sense of the term, for he says that there is only one independent entity, and not many. Nothing but God exists in its own right. The possessor of all excellent qualities, He is unknowable to the senses. He cannot even be completely known through scriptural revelation. Two of His attributes are infinite power and infinite mercy. He is endowed with the essence of Bliss. The conception is personal, but God's personality is of an absolute kind. He is not only the Creator and the Destroyer, but also the Controller of the universe in its every aspect. Individual souls and matter would cease to exist if the divine grace were withdrawn. God is perfect by Himself, and independent of all things, the universe being the revelation of His unique majesty and also a place affording opportunities to created beings for their ultimate salvation. Madhva accepts the Incarnations of God. He believes, with the Purāṇas, that whenever religion declines, God assumes human form for the "protection of the virtuous and the chastisement of the wicked."

According to Madhva souls are infinite in number, each being fundamentally different from all the others and unique in its imperfections, as is demonstrated by the variety in the degrees of men's suffering and ignorance. The soul is of the size of an atom; that is to say, it is the smallest particle, incapable of further division. Madhva speaks of three classes of souls: those that are bound but may become free, those that are committed to eternal transmigration within the sphere of the relative universe, and lastly, those that are doomed perma-

nently to the miseries of hell. Evidently Madhva does not believe in universal salvation. Thus a restriction is put on human effort and divine grace.

The prime source of *samsāra*, the relative universe, is beginningless ignorance (*avidyā*), which, as one of the twenty "substances" of his system, Madhva considers to be real. On account of it man remains ignorant both of God and of his own true nature. Salvation consists in doing away with these two aspects of ignorance. The scriptures give man a kind of mediate knowledge regarding himself, which becomes immediate as man attains Salvation through God's grace. The Knowledge of God is essential for release. Though one can learn about God from the scriptures, yet direct experience is possible only through steadfast meditation. The distinction between the selves remains, however, even after Salvation, while the bliss and knowledge that a free self experiences are inferior to the Bliss and Knowledge of God.

The essential discipline for release is spontaneous and unceasing love (*bhakti*) of God. In order to cultivate this love the aspirant should ponder about God's greatness and goodness. Through love of God the devotee obtains His grace, which is the final means of Salvation, other disciplines being mere aids. Love of God, in Madhva's system, should be more intense than any love that man may possess for himself or for material things. It should not be deflected, moreover, by any worldly obstacle. A feeling of detachment toward the world and a performance of one's appointed duties in the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gītā* engender divine love. Besides, the aspirant should hear the scriptures from a qualified preceptor, reflect on their meaning, and then constantly meditate upon it. Madhva, like *Rāmānuja* but unlike *Śaṅkara*, rejects the theory of *Jīvanmukti*, or Liberation in the human body. Therefore a man should never relinquish his duties, which include the religious rites prescribed by the scriptures.

From this brief description of the different metaphysical systems one can draw certain general conclusions regarding the ethics of the Hindus.

The goal of life is not the attainment of ethical perfection through moral action, but rather liberation from the dual conflicts of the phenomenal world and the attainment of supreme felicity. The Hindu philosophers are sceptical about the possibility of realizing perfection as long as one remains attached to the finite world. Ethical virtues are cultivated not for their own sake but to serve a higher end. Ethics is



based upon metaphysics and determined by it. In the Hindu tradition there is an integration of religion and philosophy. The one purifies the emotions and the other cultivates the intellect. Further, religion helps in the practice of contemplation, and philosophy in the exercise of right discrimination. A man performs right action when emotion and intellect balance each other and meditation makes the mind steady, just as a bird flies gracefully because of its two wings and tail.

In the state of Moksha, or Liberation, the empirical life is transcended. The bound soul cannot understand the thoughts and actions of the free soul any more than the embryo in the egg can know the nature of the outside world as seen by a full-fledged bird. The nature of Ultimate Reality, whether as the Personal God or as the Impersonal Absolute, is Goodness, Beauty, and Truth, whose reflections are seen in their counterparts in the empirical world. What an illumined soul regards as good, beautiful, or true may be quite different from what a worldly person regards as good, beautiful, or true. The actions of a person who has realized Truth often appear enigmatical to the ordinary man, but he can never perform an action which is unethical or injurious to society. Indeed, he is the inspirer of ethical laws.

All Hindu philosophers agree that faith, knowledge, and work are necessary disciplines for the attainment of Liberation. The differences between the philosophies lie in the relative importance given to the various disciplines. Even an uncompromising non-dualist like Śankara has composed many hymns in which the aspiring soul yearns for faith, love, and grace in order to obtain Liberation. Though utterly convinced of the ultimate unreality of the phenomenal universe, he was one of the most untiring social and religious workers of his time.

The value of moral actions, especially as spiritual discipline, is recognized by all the Hindu philosophers. Morality is assumed in all systems as the necessary condition for Moksha. It is true that Hindu thinkers have stressed subjective morality, or moral action for self-purification, more than objective morality calculated to bring about the well-being of others, but the reasons for this attitude have already been discussed. It is consistent with their metaphysical convictions. Co-operation and consecration, not competition, were prized in society. The Hindus never admired a ruthless, oppressive attitude. Since every man was expected to follow his own dharma, or duty, there was not much room or necessity for moral action in the form of organized charity. The "widow's mite" given with love and entailing sacrifice

on the part of the giver was much more respected than the showy generosity of the philanthropist, who not infrequently is impelled by the motive of acquiring fame or power. Since every action is the outer expression of the inner man, really good action is not possible without inner goodness.

All the Hindu philosophers agree that through unselfish action the heart is purified. Such action destroys egotism and selfish impulses. A man of pure heart alone is capable of practising the higher spiritual disciplines, such as love of God and surrender to the divine will. Indeed, without inner purity one cannot even become convinced of the existence of God. Only the aspirant with a pure heart can understand the scriptures, reason about their teachings, and contemplate their meaning.

In the Hindu view, every man in society is born with certain debts and obligations. The gods, or cosmic powers, do not help him to obtain Liberation unless these obligations are discharged. The debt to the gods is redeemed by sacrificial rites; the debt to the seers of the past, by scriptural study; and the debt to the ancestors, by the begetting of children, who assure the continuity of the culture and form the bridge, as it were, between the dead and the living. A householder has his debts to guests, to the needy, to animals, and even to insects and worms. The Upanishads ask a man to regard his father, mother, guest, and spiritual preceptor as manifestations of God and to serve them with reverence.

The *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* (V. ii. 1-3.) narrates the story of how god, man, and demon, the three offspring of Prajāpati, the Creator, sought His advice after having spent some time under Him as brahmachārins. In reply to their question He uttered thrice the sound *da*, which is the first syllable of three words: *dāmyata*, *datta*, and *dayadhvam*, meaning respectively self-control, charity, and compassion. He asked the god to practise self-control, the man charity, and the demon compassion. There exist in society three types of beings: godlike men, average human beings, and demoniacal persons. The godlike man, in spite of his culture and refinement, often lacks self-control with regard to certain vital matters; for instance, he may indulge in drink or gambling. Hence he needs to practise self-control. The average human being is greedy; he is always on the lookout for a chance to grab what belongs to others. Therefore he should practise charity. The demoniacal person is ruthless and cruel. It is his duty to practise the

discipline of compassion. The Upanishad says that even now the Creator gives the same advice about the moral law to the different types of human beings through the voice of thunder, which makes the reverberating sound *da-da-da*.

As stated before, the different systems of philosophy place varying stress on the disciplines of knowledge, faith, and action. Sāṃkhya insists that knowledge is the most effective means to freedom. The discriminative knowledge (*vivekakhyāti*) of the *puruṣa* (the spirit) and *prakṛti* (nature) destroys a man's attachment to the world. All works, both secular and spiritual, produce only temporary results and, as a consequence, cannot yield lasting fruit. Patanjali teaches that certain works promoting self-restraint and social welfare are necessary for the destruction of the subtle, evil tendencies that disturb the mind at the time of meditation. Besides, the worship of God (*Īśvara-pranidhāna*) helps in the practice of concentration and the ultimate isolation of the self from matter. Śāṅkara recognizes the value of work and devotion for inner purification, but insists that the final release is directly attained through the Knowledge of the oneness of the self and Brahman. The philosophies of Gotama (Nyāya), Kanāda (Vaiśeṣika), and Rāmānuja teach that work and knowledge are to be combined. Knowledge of Reality is not incompatible with selfless action. Action supplements knowledge by producing in the student the spirit of dispassion. This dispassion, according to Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, reveals the true nature of worldly things and quenches the will-to-live, thereby leading to the freedom of the self. With Rāmānuja, dispassion is an aid to divine knowledge, which culminates in love of God. Through love, self-will is destroyed and one surrenders oneself entirely to God's will. The Bhagavad Gītā is unique in prescribing the discipline of action for the realization of Truth. It also teaches that the liberated man can devote himself to the welfare of the world.

Most of the Hindu philosophers do not accept the ideal of *Jīvanmukti*, or the attainment of Liberation while dwelling on earth. But Śāṅkara does. With others Liberation is an eschatological experience. The near-perfect man certainly sees good and evil and feels the promptings of the ego; but he works in harmony with God's will, regarding himself as God's instrument. His ego may be likened to a sword that has become gold by touching the philosopher's stone. It retains its own shape but cannot hurt anyone. A free soul, Śāṅkara teaches, while in *saṃādhi*

sees the unity of existence, but in the normal state works for the preservation of the social order and the welfare of man.

A few points regarding the goal of Hindu ethics in the context of the modern world remain for consideration.

The Hindu philosophers, like their Western colleagues, recognize the importance of moral law for the preservation and further progress of both the individual and society. It is the observance of moral law that distinguishes men from brutes. The question is whether man, still living on the ethical plane, can transform himself into a superman or realize absolute peace, goodness, truth, and beauty, which constitute perfection. Is ethics an end in itself or does it lead to another state in which the contradictions inherent in ethics are resolved and transcended? Is ethics the whole of life or does it serve as a discipline to enable the psycho-physical man to realize his true self? The Hindu philosophers and modern Western thinkers seem to hold divergent views regarding the answers to these questions.

That Hindu ethics emphasizes the subjective value of action more than its objective worth has already been stated. It may be mentioned here that in the present-day world the Hindus can learn much from the West about the application of ethics to the welfare of society. Conditions have changed in India. The concept of dharma, which was the foundation of Hindu social life, has somewhat lost its hold upon the people. The struggle for existence has become keen. The vast masses of the people in India are victims of widespread misery resulting from general backwardness of life. To bring India in line with the progressive countries of the world, attention must be paid to the amelioration of the people's lot. Herein lies the importance of objective ethics for India. Yet even in this new orientation the ultimate goal of ethics, namely, the liberation of man from the imperfection of the phenomenal world, must not be forgotten.

Ethics is generally defined as the study of good or right conduct. It is more concerned with life as it *ought* to be lived than with life as it is *actually* lived. In ethics what we are interested in is the ideal of conduct, and not conduct as such. Therefore there is no morality without an "ought." Those who follow moral law constantly say to themselves: "I ought to have done this, I ought not to have done that"; "I ought to be this, I ought not to be that." Thus ethics is a habitual incentive for self-improvement. There lies its strength. Again, this very "oughtness" constitutes its limitation.

Before the advent of modern science the ethical laws in the West were largely determined by religion. Their sanction was derived either from tradition or scripture or from the words of a prophet. Most people lived an ethical life either from hope of reward or from fear of punishment, or from both. But today science dominates Western thinking. It has acquired its immense prestige partly for having invented what is called the scientific method and partly for promoting the physical happiness of man through the development of technology. Now, science has shaken the foundations of traditional religion by denying the existence of supersensuous sources of knowledge. Such supramental realities as God, the soul, and immortality are not encountered by physical scientists in their pursuit of knowledge. But these very concepts have been the basis of traditional moral law.

Science seeks to give a new definition of morality, and in this it is largely influenced by the science of biology. According to biologists survival for an individual living being or for a particular living species is "good." Whatever is conducive to the continuous survival of that particular individual or species is therefore good for it. All this is implicit in the Darwinian theory of evolution. Struggle for existence, in which the fittest come out victorious, is one of the methods of survival. But it may give rise to a crude view of ethics, which has been called "gladiatorial" ethics. This method operates to a great extent in the world of animals and plants. The wars of modern times, fought with barbarous ferocity through the help of weapons invented by science, for the sake of national victory, make it obvious that human beings have not discarded the method of exterminating their competitors as a means to their own survival. But humane biologists point out another secret of survival, namely, adaptation and adjustment to environmental conditions. This too is a method of evolution. The individual or group that can adjust itself harmoniously to other individuals or groups has a better chance of survival than the one acting in a hostile manner. Hence that conduct is good which is conducive to harmonious adjustment to the environment. Biologists thus give a scientific explanation of the golden rule, which, according to them, need not be held to be derived from a divine source. The purpose of ethics is therefore to promote relationships between individuals and groups which are mutually satisfying. General survival is the goal which moral philosophers should never lose sight of. Without it there cannot be any progress in civilization or culture.



This view of ethics, however, can scarcely be said to give all-round satisfaction. The scientists deny the existence of the soul. They do not believe in a mind apart from the physiological functioning of the brain. Therefore the meaning of individual survival is not quite clear. Further, a group may, for its survival, co-operate with another group (or groups) possessing common interests, and enter into competition with other groups having dissimilar interests. Thus the world becomes divided into hostile camps or blocs. The result is usually war, which—under modern conditions—can exterminate all. Mere survival, without higher values, may thus not be a desirable thing in itself.

The idea of progress, emphasized by modern science, takes it for granted that good and evil are two utterly dissimilar entities, and further that the former can be multiplied infinitely and the latter gradually minimized. The proponents of progress uphold the view that by means of scientific and other forms of knowledge man will be able to create a society from which evil will be totally eliminated. Does this goal envisaged by optimists possess a philosophical basis or is it mere wishful thinking? History does not prove that humanity as a whole and in all respects is on the road to the elimination of evil, ignorance, superstition, and misery. According to the Hindu view, the relative world is supported by the twin pillars of good and evil, pain and pleasure, and the other pairs of opposites. The sum total of happiness and unhappiness does not change. Evil, like chronic rheumatism, shifts from one place to another. World movements do not reveal progress, but simply change, as though in a kaleidoscope. Creation itself is an indication of lost balance. Where there is perfect balance there is no creation. The world will always remain imperfect. Perfection is to be sought elsewhere—outside the time-space continuum.

Moral life cannot be dissociated from struggle—an incessant struggle for perfection, for the realization of the ideal, which, however, cannot be attained on the normal plane. It has already been stated that "oughtness" is the very essence of morality. But there lies a contradiction in the concept of morality itself. Since the moral life is a struggle of good against evil, it belongs to the realm of imperfection or relativity. No one can ever be moral and at the same time perfect. "Where there is no imperfection," as Bradley says, "there is no ought, where there is no ought, there is no morality; where there is no self-contradiction, there is no ought. The ought is a self-contradiction." Struggle through contradiction is the very basis of morality.

As long as a man regards himself as a part of this world of contradiction and identifies himself with it, he must follow moral law. But the religious prophets and seers of India tell us that there is another part of man, his real Self, which transcends contradictions and is therefore perfect. The goal of ethics is, in the Hindu view, to show man the way to rediscover that real Self. There lies its true mission.

The merely ethical man, moreover, cannot be expected to bring Liberation to one involved in the struggle between good and evil. Liberation comes from the realization of the soul's true nature: simplicity, guilelessness, and innocence. It is through *māyā*, as Vedānta says, that the soul forgets its true nature. The Bible, too, states that man was perfect before his fall from paradise. This perfection a boy intuitively feels before sacrificing his chastity on the threshold of adolescence. The purity that he then loses can never be regained through the help of the moralist. The ethical man, though an experienced man of the world, is still entangled in the struggle between good and evil. His experience has been gained at the cost of his innocence. He cannot redeem an immoral person, however much he may condemn the latter, simply because he himself is no longer in possession of purity. This is why religion says that redemption comes through the grace of one who is pure in heart and above good and evil. Thus, in the classic example of the woman taken in adultery, redemption came from Christ, *der reine Tor*,<sup>1</sup> and not from the high priests, who were the wise and moral men of the time. Christ was not merely a moral man, but a pure soul who had not tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree. How significant were his words, smiting like a scourge the judges about to punish the woman: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her!"

Hindu philosophers have suggested means for resolving the conflict involved in moral action. There are, in the main, two kinds of action: optional (*kāmya*) and obligatory (*nitya*). An optional action has a particular end; it is performed by the agent who seeks that end. It is his pleasure, not his duty, to perform such an action. But if he undertakes an optional action he must not violate moral law while performing it. But obligatory action must be performed; its non-performance causes harm, while if one performs it one does not obtain any special and direct result (the indirect result being the purification of the heart).

<sup>1</sup> "The guileless Fool." The phrase occurs in Wagner's *Parsifal*.



Obligatory action belongs to the realm of duty and may sometimes be tiresome. But it must be performed in accordance with moral law.

The Bhagavad Gītā states that all actions ordinarily bind their doers by creating attachment to the result. It is not action, but the desire for the result, that brings suffering. Therefore the doer is asked to relinquish all attachment to the result. Though his body and senses perform action, his mind must remain unruffled in success and failure. Hinduism advocates renunciation *in* action, not renunciation *of* action. A duty must be done, regardless of its result, because it ought to be done. The desire for the result is irrelevant. This principle is to be applied as well to social service. Neither private ends nor the so-called public good should be the motive. If anyone is benefited by the action, well and good; but that should not be the impelling motive of the doer. He should perform the action simply because it ought to be done.

What happens if action is performed in this way? Though the doer rejects the immediate and limited fruit of an action, he is preparing himself for the supreme fruit of life, namely, the realization of perfection. Thus we see ethics opening the door to the realm which lies beyond ethics.

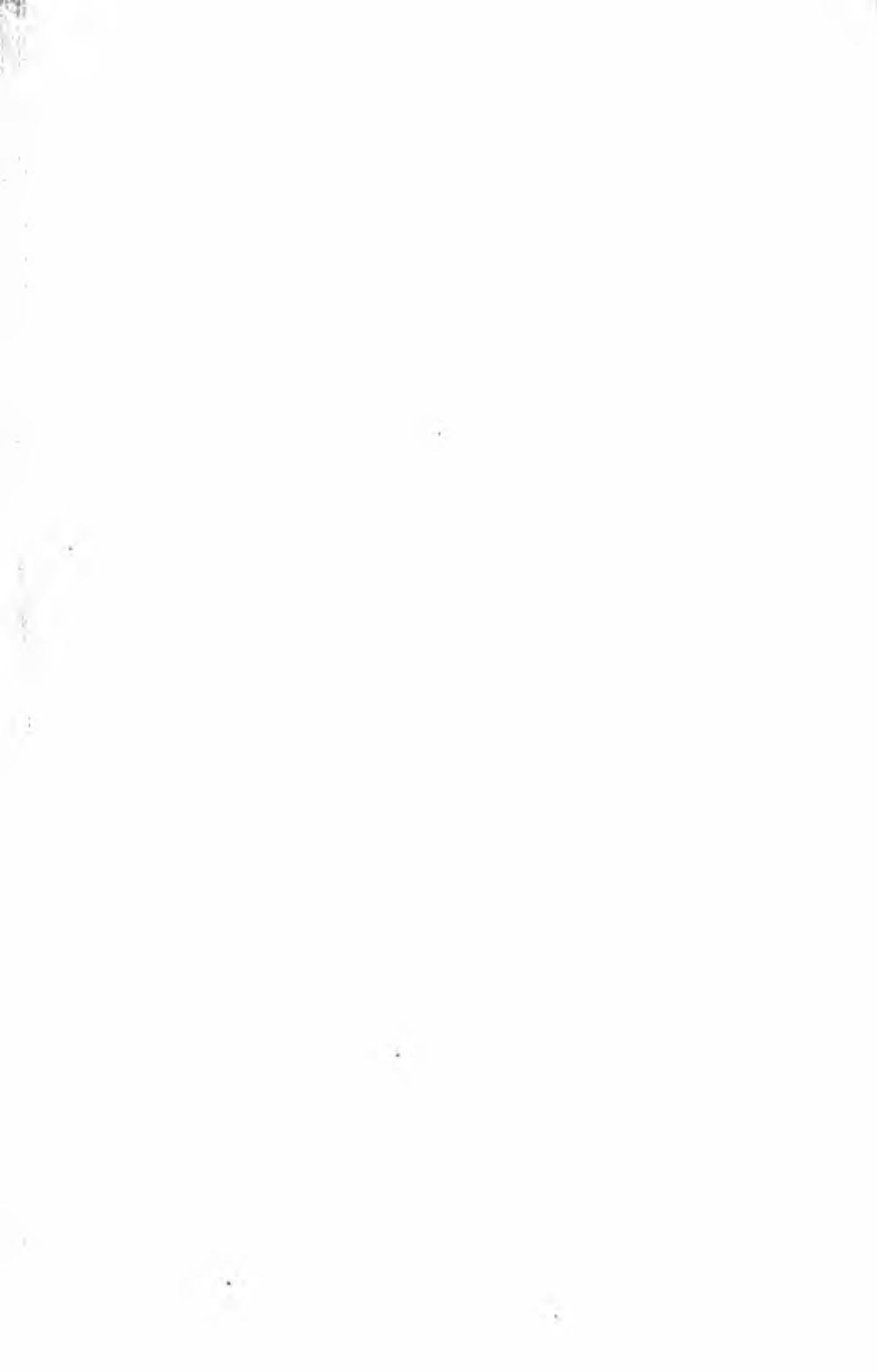
Perfection is broadly defined by Hindu philosophers in two ways. For the believer in God it means God-realization, and for the non-dualist it means Self-realization. The devotee of God regards himself as God's instrument, subordinating his own will to God's will and dedicating his work entirely to God. His own ego is kept under control. Work done in this spirit becomes a mode of worship which brings about the fruit of God-realization. For the non-dualist motiveless action purifies the heart. The proper mood is thus created for the cultivation of the Knowledge of the Self, which is birthless, deathless, non-dual, free from good and evil, eternal, devoid of the illusory notions of being either the agent or the enjoyer of the result, and is all peace. This Knowledge liberates man from the bondage of the world. Both dualists and non-dualists are utterly unselfish. Free from the idea of agency, they transcend the moral "ought." While dwelling in the body both the knower of God and the knower of the Self may perform action, but their action is never under any pressure. No categorical imperative of duty can function, in them, as an impelling force. They work from love. Spontaneous action flows from the fullness of their hearts. The question of improving the world is meaningless to them. The dualist sees God not in a limited form but as dwelling in all beings. Through

loving service to God's creatures he worships God. The knower of the Self, on the other hand, sees the Unity of Existence. There exists for him only one Soul. He loves his neighbours as himself because they are his own Self. Needless to say, *all* living beings are neighbours to a non-dualist.

Work of lasting benefit to humanity is performed only by those blessed souls who are illumined by the Higher Knowledge and consequently free from moral struggle. The action performed by others is neither serene nor totally disinterested. Whatever benefit such action may produce in the phenomenal world, it cannot bring about the Highest Good. Even in philanthropy there lurks somewhere in the sub-conscious mind of the doer a desire for fame or power. He is not altogether motiveless. Only the fully illumined person can be free from selfish motives. His ego has either been burnt in the fire of Self-Knowledge or totally transformed by the touch of God.

An illumined person is no longer troubled by the idea of good and evil. After the realization of Truth he never again makes a false step. His struggles are over. With the destruction of *māyā*, the cosmic ignorance which conjures up the dream of duality, he is no longer haunted by the dream of good and evil. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (IV. iv. 23.) declares: "Evil does not overtake him, but he transcends all evil. Evil does not trouble him, [but] he consumes all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts, and a knower of Brahman." He does not strive after morality from fear of punishment or hope of reward or for the attainment of any mundane good. Moral virtues such as humility, self-control, and tranquillity, as *Gauḍapāda* says (*Mā. Up. Gau. Kā.* IV. 86.) become natural attributes of the illumined knower of Brahman.

# ŚVETĀŚVATARA UPANISHAD



## INTRODUCTION

THE *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, which belongs to the Taittiriya or Black Yajur-Veda, may be regarded as one of the authoritative Upanishads which form the source of the Vedānta philosophy. Its verses are quoted profusely in all Vedāntic treatises. The name seems to have been derived from the sage Śvetāśvatara, who, as we read at the end of the last chapter, imparted the Upanishad to a company of world-renouncing hermits.

That the *Śvetāśvatara* ranks high among the Upanishads may be inferred from the fact that the non-dualist Śaṅkarāchārya, the qualified non-dualist Rāmānujāchārya, and the teachers of many other schools of Hindu philosophy have quoted from it to support their respective views. The Upanishad contains passages which can be interpreted to support dualism, qualified non-dualism, non-dualism, and even other systems of thought. Certain verses can be related to the Sāṃkhya philosophy of Kapila.

It is apparent that the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, unlike most of the major Upanishads, contains a strong theistic strain. Names like Hara (I. 10.), Rudra (III. 2, 4; IV. 12, 21, 22.), Śiva (III. 11; IV. 14.), Bhagavān (III. 11.), Agni, Āditya, Vāyu (IV. 2.), etc., which appear in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, are generally used as epithets of the Personal God. Devotion, or bhakti, moreover, is mentioned as a means of realizing the Supreme Spirit, though the word *bhakti* actually occurs only once, and that in the very last verse. The word *deva* is used frequently. All this, according to Rāmānuja and other theistic interpreters, establishes the Personal God as Ultimate Reality. But Śaṅkarāchārya adroitly gives these words a non-dualistic meaning and emphasizes that the goal of this, as of the other major Upanishads, is to prove the sole reality of the non-dual Brahman and the unsubstantiality of the jiva and the phenomenal universe. The word *deva*, which means, literally, "luminous one," signifies for him Brahman, or Pure Consciousness. Likewise, Hara means "destroyer of evil," and Śiva, "all good."

Even if a theistic interpretation be given to certain passages in the

Upanishad, this need not invalidate its non-dualistic aim. Theism can be accepted as a step toward non-dualism. Non-dualists do not deny the Personal God. He is the highest manifestation of Brahman in the phenomenal universe. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe. But the whole creation is *māyā*, a "power belonging to the Lord Himself and hidden in its own *gunas*." (*Śvet. Up. I. 3.*) Omniscience, omnipresence, and the other attributes of the Godhead belong to the world of *māyā*; they are non-existent in Brahman. Both *Īśvara* and the *jīva* are concepts of the relative universe. *Māyā*, which is responsible for the appearance of multiplicity, is subject to the Lord, whereas the *jīva* is subject to *māyā*.

Non-dualists assign a high place to *Īśvara*, or the Personal God. They also speak of *bhakti*, or love of God, as one of the chief disciplines for the attainment of the non-dual Brahman. The worship of the Personal God with devotion purifies the mind and helps in the cultivation of concentration. A man endowed with a pure mind is qualified to hear about Brahman, reason about It, and meditate on It. Śāṅkarāchārya has written many hymns full of devotion to the Personal God.<sup>1</sup>

The Sāṃkhya philosophers quote the fifth verse of the fourth chapter of the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* to show its relationship with the Sāṃkhya philosophy. According to them, the red, white, and black colours mentioned in this verse refer to the three *gunas*: *rajas*, *sattva*, and *tamas*, whereas the word *aja*, meaning "unborn," signifies *prakṛiti*. But Śāṅkarāchārya gives a different interpretation. He explains the words to mean fire, water, and earth and quotes the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* to support his view. One thing, however, seems to be clear about the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*: that it teaches the unity of souls in the non-dual *Ātman*, whereas Sāṃkhya speaks of an ultimate plurality of souls. The Upanishad is non-dualistic; Sāṃkhya is pluralistic and postulates the separateness of *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*, both of which, according to its philosophers, are ultimately real. The Upanishad speaks of *prakṛiti*, or *māyā*, as the power of the Great Spirit and denies it an independent existence.

The second chapter of the Upanishad gives suggestions for the practice of concentration and other disciplines of Yoga, which have been accepted, in some form or other, by all the systems of Hindu philosophy. Without these disciplines Ultimate Reality remains a mere theory.

A study of the entire *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* will show that, like

<sup>1</sup> See *Self-Knowledge*, Appendix, pp. 175-218.

the other principal Upanishads, it affirms the non-dual Brahman as Ultimate Reality. It preaches the philosophy of Advaita.

There are a number of commentaries on the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*. Special mention may be made of those associated with the names of Śankarāchārya, Śankarānanda, Nārāyana, and Vijnāna. Though the notes and comments given here are principally based upon the explanation of Śankarāchārya, I have also consulted the other three.

As in the first volume of *The Upanishads*, I have translated the introduction of Śankarāchārya. This rather lengthy piece of work gives the gist of the Upanishad, which is, according to the great commentator, pure and simple non-dualism: Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, which is birthless, deathless, immutable, undifferentiated, and inscrutable to the finite mind, is the sole Reality. Names and forms, which constitute the phenomenal world, are the creation of māyā, which has no existence independent of Brahman. To the illumined soul, the universe, which appears diverse from the relative standpoint, is nothing but Brahman. When the truth is known, everything is realized to be Brahman.

A peculiar characteristic of Śankarāchārya's introduction—as of his explanation of the text—is that it abounds in quotations from Smṛiti,<sup>2</sup> whereas his interpretation of other Upanishads is mainly based upon Upanishadic evidence. This fact has created a doubt in the minds of many scholars as to whether Śankarāchārya actually wrote the commentary associated with his name. Further, according to these scholars, the commentary lacks the usual penetration, dignity, and insight of Śankarāchārya's elucidations of the ten other major Upanishads. Lastly, the usual notes of Ānandagiri<sup>3</sup> are missing. Therefore it has been said that some other philosopher wrote the commentary and circulated it under the name of Śankara with a view to its greater appreciation by the public—a common custom in medieval times both in India and in Europe.

Whether Śankara's commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* really lacks the grandeur of his commentaries on the other major Upanishads is a matter of opinion. As regards his lavish use of quotations from the Bhagavad Gītā and the Purāṇas in his introduction and in his explanation of the text, it can be said that Śankarāchārya may have felt a

<sup>2</sup> The sacred books of the Hindus, subsidiary to the Vedas, guiding their daily life and conduct; they include the epics and the Purāṇas.

<sup>3</sup> A noted Sanskrit scholar who wrote commentaries on Śankara's interpretations of the scriptures.



special need to establish his thesis of non-dualism on the evidence of Smṛiti. This body of scriptures is generally associated with dualism and is used by the dualistic philosophers as their principal source of authority. But Smṛiti, which derives its validity from the Vedas, cannot differ from them concerning the nature of Ultimate Reality, however different its emphasis may be on the method of attaining that Reality.

It will be quite clear, from a perusal of the introduction, that the Smṛiti passages quoted are suffused with the concept of Non-duality. Their aim and purpose, it will be noticed, is 'to prove the sole reality of the non-dual Brahman. The Upanishads, which form the philosophical section of the Vedas, are generally incomprehensible to the average mind on account of their abstract nature: the same teaching is given in Smṛiti, in more concrete form, through stories and legends, for the easy comprehension of all. Smṛiti, consequently, does not conflict with the Vedas. Therefore Śankara, in his introduction, may have used quotations from Smṛiti, taking advantage of the theistic strain of the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, in order to prove that the teaching of non-dualism is the ultimate aim of the whole Hindu spiritual tradition.

S. N.

## ŚRĪ ŚĀṆKARĀCHĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION

WE PROPOSE to write a short introduction to the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad in order that the treatise may be easily understood by those who inquire about Brahman.

Ātman [i.e. the jīva] is essentially Consciousness (Chit), Existence (Sat), and Bliss (Ānanda). It is one and without a second. Yet It becomes the victim of avidyā, which rests in Ātman and is dependent upon It. The existence of avidyā is deduced from the universal experience expressed by such statements as "I am ignorant," "I do not know myself," etc.<sup>1</sup> Falling under the spell of avidyā, Ātman becomes lost, as it were, to the infinite majesty and knowledge which are innate in It. It thus falls prey to unending tribulations. Under the power of avidyā, the jīva considers what is not the Highest Good of life to be the Highest Good wished for by all. Hence the individual ātman, being unable to experience Liberation (Moksha), which is really the Highest Good, falls into the ocean of saṁsāra and wanders about—assuming the bodies of gods (devas), men, animals, or birds—pursued by the sharks of malice, anger, and passion. In the course of this wandering, by chance it may perform some meritorious action and be born as a brāhmin<sup>2</sup> or

<sup>1</sup> The word *avidyā* means absence of knowledge, or nescience. *Avidyā* is the śakti, or power, of Brahman, in association with which Brahman creates, preserves, and dissolves the universe. As the power to burn inheres in fire, so *avidyā* inheres in Brahman. The power cannot be separated from that in which it inheres. It is because *avidyā* obscures the self-luminous Brahman that the ignorant deny Brahman's reality, saying, "Brahman does not exist; It does not shine." Under the spell of *avidyā*, the indivisible, eternal, and ever present Brahman appears as the jīva, the embodied, living soul, and helplessly wanders from one life to another, experiencing the bitter and sweet fruits of its own karma. The proof that the jīva is covered by nescience is its own confession, as expressed in the statements "I am ignorant" and "I do not know myself."

<sup>2</sup> A brāhmin belongs to the highest caste in Hindu society. He is born with spiritual qualities. According to orthodox Hindu tradition, those who belong to the three highest castes are entitled to study the Vedas, which teach the Knowledge of Brahman. The śūdras belong to the lowest caste; they are debarred from study of the Vedas and can attain Liberation by means of knowledge learnt from Smṛiti.

some similar human being entitled to the Knowledge of Brahman. Then, when it performs action, it surrenders the result to God<sup>3</sup> and becomes free of attachment, hatred, and other similar blemishes. Thus, becoming pure in heart, it realizes the transitory nature of the world and cultivates a spirit of dispassion toward the enjoyment of [material] objects, here and hereafter. [Seeking the Knowledge of Brahman,] it approaches a preceptor and hears from him the teachings of Vedānta. Afterwards it reasons about these teachings and meditates on them. At long last it realizes the oneness of Brahman and the self, as epitomized in the Vedic statement "I am Brahman," rids itself of avidyā and its effect,<sup>4</sup> and becomes free from grief. This is called Liberation, which is characterized by the cessation of nescience and is attained through Knowledge alone.

Therefore it is in the fitness of things that the Upanishad should undertake to teach the Knowledge of Brahman, whose purpose is the destruction of nescience.

That the Knowledge of Brahman bestows Immortality is known from the following Śruti and Smṛiti passages.<sup>5</sup>

The Vedic evidence:

"By knowing Brahman one achieves Immortality here [in this body]. There is no other way to its attainment." (Taittiriya Āranyaka VI. i. 6; Nṛsiṃhapurvatāpani Upanishad I. 6.)

"If he does not know It (Ātman) here, a great destruction awaits him." (Ke. Up. II. 5.)

"Those who know It (Brahman) become immortal." (Ka. Up. II. iii. 2.)

"Desiring what, and for whose sake, are you wearying out the body?" (Br. Up. IV. iv. 12.)

"After knowing It (Brahman) one is not stained by sinful action."

"The knower of Ātman transcends grief." (Chh. Up. VII: i. 3.)

"Having realized Ātman . . . one is freed from the jaws of death." (Ka. Up. I. iii. 15.)

"He who knows this Brahman, hidden in the cave of the heart, cuts asunder even here the knot of ignorance." (Mu. Up. II. i. 10.)

<sup>3</sup> The performance of duty as a spiritual discipline is described in the Bhagavad Gītā.

<sup>4</sup> I. e. the experience of pleasure and pain.

<sup>5</sup> The word Śruti refers to the Vedas, which are divinely revealed and of which the Upanishads form the essential part. The books of Smṛiti, which are subsidiary to the Vedas, are ascribed to human authorship. (References to Śruti and Smṛiti passages have been omitted where they could not be traced.)

"The fetters of the heart are broken, all doubts are resolved, and all works cease to bear fruit, when He (Brahman) is beheld who is both high and low." (Mu. Up. II. ii. 8.)

"As flowing rivers disappear into the sea, losing their names and forms, so a wise man, freed from name and form, attains the Purusha, who is greater than the Great." (Mu. Up. III. ii. 8.)

"He who knows the Supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman." (Mu. Up. III. ii. 9.)

"He who knows that imperishable Being, bright, without shadow, without body, without colour, verily obtains the Supreme." (Pr. Up. IV. 10.)

"Know Him, the Purusha, who alone is to be known . . . that death may not affect you." (Pr. Up. VI. 6.)

"What delusion, what sorrow, can there be for him who beholds that oneness [of the jiva and Brahman]?" (Iś. Up. 7.)

"He obtains Immortality through Knowledge." (Iś. Up. 11.)

"The wise investigate all forms, and departing from this world, attain Immortality."

"He who thus knows this Upanishad shakes off all sins and becomes firmly established in the infinite and the highest Heaven." (Ke. Up. IV. 9.)

"Those who are absorbed in Brahman become immortal."

"The embodied soul, having realized the truth about the Self, becomes free from grief and obtains the wished-for goal."

"By knowing Him who alone pervades the universe, men become immortal." (Śvet. Up. III. 7.)

"By truly realizing Him . . . one attains the supreme peace." (Śvet. Up. IV. 11.)

"Verily, by knowing Him one cuts asunder the fetters of death." (Śvet. Up. IV. 15.)

"The gods and seers of yore who knew It (Brahman) attained eternal peace—and not others."

The evidence from Smṛiti:

"Endued with evenness of mind, one casts off, in this very life, both good deeds and evil deeds." (B. G. II. 50.)

"The wise, of even mind, renounce the fruit of action. Freed from the fetters of birth, they attain the state that is beyond all evil." (B. G. II. 51.)

"By the raft of Knowledge alone will you be borne over all sin." (B. G. IV. 36.)

"The fire of Knowledge reduces all works to ashes." (B. G. IV. 37.)

"By knowing it (the teaching about Brahman) a man becomes wise, O Bhārata, and fulfils all his duties." (B. G. XV. 20.)

"Then, having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me." (B. G. XVIII. 55.)

"Self-Knowledge is the best of all forms of knowledge; it is the highest of all sciences, because through it one attains Immortality."

"The twice-born (the brāhmin) obtains the fulfilment of all desires through Self-Knowledge and not by any other means."

"He who sees himself in all beings, by means of his true understanding, first attains unity with all and then realizes the eternal Brahman."

"The man endowed with perfect Self-Knowledge is not entangled by his action; but the man devoid of this Knowledge enters saṃsāra."

"A man is bound by karma (action) and freed by Knowledge; therefore the far-seeing sannyāsins do not engage in karma."

"The wise of olden times, endowed with firm resolution, spoke of Knowledge as the means to realize the Highest Good. Thus, by means of pure Knowledge, a man is liberated from all sins."

"The illumined person, having realized the power of death, attains Brahman, which is of eternal radiance, by means of Knowledge. There is no other way to realize Brahman. The seers know this and remain satisfied."

"The purity attained by the embodied being through the Knowledge of God is the supreme purity. The attainment of Self-Knowledge, by means of yoga, is the highest dharma."

"The knower of the Self passes beyond grief. He is not afraid of anything—neither of the approach of death nor of death itself. He fears nothing whatsoever."

"Ātman is not born, nor does It die. It is not killed nor is It the killer. It is not bound nor does It cause anyone's bondage. It is neither liberated nor the giver of Liberation. The jiva, in reality, is the Supreme Self; all else besides is unreal."

Thus the Vedas, the Smritis, and the Itihāsas<sup>6</sup> speak of Knowledge alone as the means to Liberation. Therefore it is in the fitness of things that the teachings of the Upanishad, whose purpose is to show the way of Knowledge, should begin.

Further, the very etymological meaning of the word Upanishad denotes that Knowledge alone is the discipline for the attainment of

<sup>6</sup> The Itihāsas are books of legends.

*Liberation, which is man's Highest Good. The prefix upa means near, and ni, completely. [The Upanishad, when learnt from a qualified teacher, completely destroys ignorance, etc.] The verbal root sad means to loosen, to attain, and to destroy. By the word Upanishad is denoted the Vidyā (Knowledge) regarding the Entity (Brahman) which is sought to be established in the Svetāśvatara Upanishad, which we intend to explain. Since the book aims at establishing this same Knowledge, it is therefore also called Upanishad.<sup>7</sup>*

Now to sum up: The Knowledge of Brahman, which bestows the Highest Good, is designated as Upanishad because it shatters and destroys avidyā, or ignorance, the seed of saṃsāra, in those seekers of Liberation who, having lost all thirst for objects seen on earth or heard of as existing in heaven, pursue this Knowledge with utter firmness and devotion. The Knowledge of Brahman is also called Upanishad for the further reason that it enables the above-mentioned seekers to attain the Supreme Brahman, or loosens for them the possibility of such miseries as dwelling in a womb and experiencing birth, old age, and death.

The following objection may be raised: If the Knowledge of Brahman were the sole means to the attainment of Liberation, then one could justify the teachings of the Upanishad, which establishes that Knowledge; but this is not so; for work, too, is said to bestow Liberation. For instance, one reads such passages in the Vedas as: "We (the devas) have drunk the soma juice; therefore we are immortals" (Atharvaśira Upanishad III. 2.) and "Those who perform the sacrifice known as the Chaturmāsyam earn undying merit." This objection, however, cannot be accepted as valid, because it contradicts the Vedas, the Smritis, and also reason.<sup>8</sup> The following passages may be cited from the Vedas as refuting it:

"As on this earth the objects [such as rice or wheat] earned by action [such as tilling the ground, sowing, etc.] come to an end [through consumption], so also, in the heavenly world, the celestial pleasures earned

<sup>7</sup> The primary meaning of the word Upanishad is Vidyā, or the Knowledge of Brahman; the secondary meaning is the book that deals with that Knowledge.

<sup>8</sup> The word karma, or work, denotes the sacrifices (ritualistic and philanthropic actions) described in the Vedas. An action is dependent upon the doer, the instrument of action, and the result. Because it is associated with these multiple factors, karma, or action, is utterly distracting from the Knowledge of the non-dual Brahman, which transcends even the slightest trace of diversity.



by meritorious action come to an end through enjoyment." (Chh. Up. VIII. i. 6.)

"By knowing It (Brahman) alone, one attains Immortality—there is no other way to its attainment." (Mahāvākya Upanishad 3.)

"Neither by work, nor by offspring, nor by wealth, does one attain Immortality, but by renunciation alone." (Kaivalya Upanishad I. 3; Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad VIII. 14.)

"Frail indeed are those rafts of the sacrifices, conducted by eighteen persons, upon whom rests the inferior work; therefore they [the results of the sacrifices] are destructible. Fools who rejoice in them as the Highest Good fall victims again and again to old age and death." (Mu. Up. I. ii. 7.)

"Nothing that is eternal can be produced by what is not eternal." (Mu. Up. I. ii. 12.)

The following may be cited from Smṛiti:

"A man is bound by karma and freed by Knowledge; therefore the far-seeing sannyāsins do not engage in karma."

"This ancient saṃsāra is said to be stained because it is filled with the impurities of ignorance. Liberation is attained through the destruction of impurities, and not through millions of actions."

"The wise do not achieve Liberation by means of offspring or action or wealth. It is achieved only by means of renunciation. Otherwise, alas, one wanders about in the world."

"As one performs work, so one develops attachment to its fruit, which stands in the way of overcoming death. The wise, by means of Knowledge alone, realize the eternal and self-luminous Brahman; there is no other path to Its realization."

"Thus abiding by the injunctions of the three Vedas and desiring desires, they are subject to death and rebirth." (B. G. IX. 21.)

"The stages of life and the duties pertaining to them, which are prescribed for brāhmins and members of the other castes, are wearisome. Ātman cannot be realized through the performance of duties belonging to a particular stage, or by means of the Vedas, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, or penances and various intense austerities, or by means of diverse kinds of gifts. The wise realize Ātman through Knowledge alone."

"The various actions laid down in the Vedas are, like the kimpāka fruit,<sup>9</sup> inauspicious in the end. Filled with myriads of miseries, they

<sup>9</sup> The kimpāka fruit looks very attractive from outside, but inside it is repulsive. Likewise, the ritualistic actions prescribed by the Vedas yield



do not yield any real happiness. Therefore why should I, who am eager for Liberation, perform the Vedic actions? Chained by ignorance, a man is said to be bound. Knowledge puts an end to his bondage, as light destroys darkness. Therefore Liberation is achieved through Knowledge, by means of the destruction of ignorance."

"All actions—such as giving gifts of various kinds, performing penances, austerities, and sacrifices, being truthful, making pilgrimages, and discharging the duties belonging to various stages of life—yield fruit which is reaped in heaven. They are mixed with pain and are impermanent. But Knowledge yields a fruit that is certain, peaceful, and highly significant."

"By means of sacrifices one attains a godly status; by means of austerities, the status of Brahmā (the Creator God); by means of gifts, one enjoys various delectable objects. But Liberation is attained through Knowledge."

"By means of the rope of good action one climbs to heaven, and by means of the rope of evil action one descends into hell. But the wise sever both ropes with the sword of Knowledge, become free from body-consciousness, and attain peace."

"Give up both righteousness and unrighteousness. Give up both truth and untruth. And then give up that by which you have given up those two."<sup>10</sup>

Thus karma cannot be a means to Liberation, for such a view conflicts with the injunctions of both the Vedas and the Smritis.

The attainment of Liberation through action is in conflict, also, with reason. If Liberation is the fruit of karma, then it must be one of the four kinds of fruit.<sup>11</sup> That which is accomplished by means of action

happiness both here and hereafter, and therefore appear very agreeable. But that happiness, however enjoyable, is finite and comes to an end when the experience is over, whereupon one feels bitter. On the other hand, Liberation, which is achieved through Knowledge, is eternal and undying. Hence the wise abstain from sacrifices and other actions that produce a limited result, and engage in the pursuit of Knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> I.e. philosophical discrimination.

<sup>11</sup> There are four kinds of action, each with its fruit: (1) Action by which a previously non-existent entity is produced, as when a pot or cloth is produced from clay or thread; (2) action by which one entity is produced through the transformation of another, as when curds are made from milk; (3) purificatory action, as when a mirror is cleaned by rubbing off the dirt that covers it; and (4) action by which one attains an object unattained before, such as reaching a village by walking. But Liberation, or Self-Knowledge, does not belong in any of these four categories. It is ever existent, immutable, always pure, and the inmost Self of all.

is seen to be non-eternal. "What is produced from a cause comes to an end." All agree that Liberation is eternal. The Vedas, in one of their ritualistic chapters, state: "O mortal man, you are reborn as your offspring. That is your immortality." Further, in discussing rituals, the Vedas speak of the immortal fruit of sacrifices. But as has already been stated, work brings about bondage and cannot bestow eternal Liberation.

Objection: By means of action, according to your own admission, one attains to the status of the deity. Is this bondage?

Reply: Yes, all works by their nature create bondage. The Vedas and the Smritis state:

"By means of work one goes to the Plane of the Fathers." (Br. Up. I. v. 16.)

"Such a plane is earned through merit." (Chh. Up. II. xxxiii. 1.)

"Ignorant fools, regarding sacrifices and humanitarian works as the highest, do not know any higher good. Having enjoyed their reward on the heights of heaven, gained by good works, they enter again this world or a lower one." (Mu. Up. I. ii. 10.)

"The far-seeing sages are not attached to action. The Purusha is Knowledge alone, and not action."

"Thus abiding by the injunctions of the three Vedas and desiring desires, they are subject to death and rebirth." (B. G. IX. 21.)

But if work is performed only for the gratification of the Lord, without any desire for fruit, then it causes the purification of the heart, which in turn produces knowledge conducive to the attainment of Liberation. Thus motiveless action brings about Liberation by gradual stages.

The Lord says in the Bhagavad Gītā:

"He who works without attachment, resigning his actions to Brahman, is untainted by sin, as a lotus leaf by water. Only with the body, the mind, the understanding, and the senses do the yogis act, without attachment, for the purification of the heart." (B. G. V. 10-11.)

"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, O son of Kunti—do it as an offering to Me. Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions, which bear good or evil results. With your mind firmly set on the yoga of renunciation, you shall become free and come to Me." (B. G. IX. 27-28.)

Liberation is impossible without the purification of the heart. The heart is purified by work. This is the process of attaining Liberation; and it is thus described in the Vishnudharma:

"First of all a man studies the Vedas; next he performs sacrifices; afterwards he renounces action; and at last he becomes qualified for knowledge leading to Liberation. Thus the yogi is liberated step by step. Until the sins accumulated through many births are consumed, a man's mind is not directed to Govinda (God). Through the austerities, knowledge, and deep meditation of thousands of births, his sins are destroyed, and then love of Krishna grows in his heart. Sinful desires alone are the obstacles to final Liberation; therefore those who are fearful of samsāra should make intense efforts to control such desires. They are controlled through the giving of gold, through bathing in sacred waters, and through the practice of great physical austerities, as prescribed by the scriptures. Sinful desires are also removed by worship of the Deity, the hearing of the Vedas and other scriptures, pilgrimages to holy places, and service of the guru."

Rishi Yājñavalkya, too, speaks of the need of purifying the heart to attain Liberation and of the method of such purification:

"The purification of the heart is the duty of all aspirants, especially of world-renouncing sannyāsins; for this is the means of cultivating knowledge which leads to the freedom of the soul. As a mirror stained with impurities cannot reflect an image, so the impure heart cannot reflect Self-Knowledge. The yogi realizes Immortality after having purified the heart by the following means: worship of the spiritual preceptor, inquiry into the Vedas and other scriptures based upon them, performance of righteous actions, the keeping of holy company, the hearing of holy talk, avoidance of the touch and sight of a woman, the seeing of the Self in all beings, non-acceptance of others' property, the wearing of the coarse ochre cloth,<sup>12</sup> withdrawal of the senses from the enjoyment of objects, relinquishment of sleepiness and idleness, investigation into the nature of the physical body, the regarding of selfish action as sinful, control of rajas and tamas and cultivation of sattva, desirelessness, and control of the sense-organs. Study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Purāṇas, and other religious treatises, performance of sacrifices, practice of brahmacharya and austerities, control of the senses, faith in the words of the teacher and the scriptures, fasting, and non-dependence upon others are also among the means for the attainment of Self-Knowledge."

The following quotation from an Upanishad belonging to the Atharva-Veda shows that Self-Knowledge is dependent upon purification of the heart:

<sup>12</sup> Sannyāsins dress in ochre cloths.

"After thousands of births, when the accumulated sins have been destroyed, the seeker discovers, through yoga, the means to put an end to *samsāra*." (Yoga-śikhā Upanishad I. 78.)

"After the destruction of his sins the *sannyāsin* of pure heart regards all beings as he does his own self."

The *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* speaks of sacrificial actions as the means to Knowledge:

"The *brāhmins* seek to know *Ātman* by means of Vedic study, sacrifices, gifts, austerity, and the relinquishment of enjoyments." (Br. Up. IV. iv. 22.)

Objection: From the following scriptural passage it is known that work, too, is a means of attaining Immortality: "He who is aware that both Knowledge and ignorance should be pursued together, overcomes death through ignorance and obtains Immortality through Knowledge." (Iś. Up. 11.)

The following passage from *Smṛiti* likewise supports this contention: "Both austerities and Knowledge are the supreme means of attaining the Highest Good."

Reply: It is true that work is a means to Liberation, but it is not a direct means. The attainment of Liberation depends upon the purification of the heart, and this is achieved through work. Thus action is said to be conducive to Liberation only in an indirect sense.

The two passages mentioned above undoubtedly speak of Knowledge and action as means to Liberation. One may ask, "How is this possible?" The concluding sentence of each quotation gives the answer. The quotation from the *Upanishad* ends by saying that the seeker overcomes death by means of action based upon ignorance and attains Liberation through Knowledge. The concluding part of the second quotation is: "Sin is destroyed through austerities and Liberation attained through Knowledge."

If any section of the *Vedas* describes the performance of action but does not mention purification of the heart as its indirect result, then one will find the mention of such a result in another recension of the *Vedas*. [Many sections of the *Vedas* have more than one recension.]

Objection: There is a scriptural passage that says: "One should live a hundred years on earth, performing action." (Iś. Up. 2.) This bids one engage in action all through life. That being so, how is it possible for one to attain Liberation through Knowledge unaccompanied by action?

Reply: The above scriptural passage applies only to those who are

entitled to action, and not to those knowers of Brahman who have transcended the necessity of action. Therefore men of Knowledge cannot be asked to perform action. Scripture supports this contention. For example, scripture says:

"The knowers of Brahman cannot be asked to perform sacrificial rites, which are obligatory for the rishis. They are not under the control of scripture and therefore are not restricted by its injunctions."

"That is why the knowers of Brahman of olden times did not perform the Agnihotra sacrifice."<sup>13</sup> (Kau. Up. II. 5.)

"Knowing this very Self, the brāhmins renounce the desire for sons, for wealth, and for the worlds, and lead a mendicant life." (Br. Up. III. v. 1.)

"The sages who had realized Brahman said: 'Why should we study? For what purpose should we sacrifice?' How is a man established in Brahman? The way he follows is the way."<sup>14</sup>

The Bhagavad Gītā states:

"But verily, the man who rejoices in the Self and is satisfied with the Self and is content in the Self alone—he has nothing for which he should work. He has no object to gain by what he does in this world, nor any to lose by what he leaves undone; nor is there anyone, among all beings, on whom he need depend for any object." (B. G. II. 17-18.)

The following is from the story of Kālakuta in the Līṅga Purāṇa:

"The brāhmins who through knowledge have freed themselves from attachment, even though living in a body, are freed from duties. If, on the other hand, they are conscious of duties, then they have not known Truth. Because the knower of Brahman is truly liberated in this very body, he has no duty in this life or hereafter. One who is devoted to the practice of Knowledge and well versed in the truth of things gives up the notion of duty and verily attains Knowledge. O great brāhmins, the fool who, identified with castes and stages of life, gives up Knowledge and takes delight in other things is without doubt a victim of ignorance. Those who, still blinded by ignorance, act under the influence of anger, fear, greed, delusion, the idea of separateness, lust, *tamas*, and righteousness and unrighteousness, assume, after death,

<sup>13</sup> This sacrifice was obligatory for all except *sannyāsins*.

<sup>14</sup> I.e. one is established in Brahman through renunciation of action, and not through any action prescribed in the Vedas. Scripture ceases to be mandatory for such a *sannyāsin*.

corresponding bodies. The body is the source of suffering; therefore one should give up ignorance.<sup>15</sup> Those yogis who, while dwelling in the body, overcome ignorance through Knowledge, discard righteousness and unrighteousness, anger, and other similar blemishes, which are products of the body. When these are destroyed, the yogis no longer assume a new body, are delivered from the threefold miseries of *samsāra*, and become free."

The following is from the *Sivadharmottara*:

"The yogi who is satisfied with drinking the nectar of Knowledge and who has attained the goal of his striving is beyond all duty. If he is still conscious of duty, then he has not realized Truth. The true yogi has no duty here or hereafter. Imbued with same-sightedness toward all beings, he is completely free in this very body."

Therefore the injunction that one should live a hundred years on earth performing action (Iś. Up. 2.) applies to the ignorant and not to the wise, for the latter are free from the notion of duty.

It also should be noted that the statement of the *Iśa Upanishad* that one should work is not used in that context as an injunction; it means only that a man endowed with Self-Knowledge can engage in action if he so wishes, thus showing the glory of Knowledge. In other words, a *jñāni*, even though he engages throughout life in action, good or evil, is not affected by its fruit, because he is endowed with Self-Knowledge.

Let us try to probe the meaning of this verse of the *Iśa Upanishad*. The *Upanishad* commences with the statement: "All this—whatever exists in this changing universe—should be covered by the Lord" (Iś. Up. 1); which means that the *jñāni* should regard the whole universe as Brahman. The *Upanishad*, continuing, says: "Protect the Self by renunciation." (Iś. Up. 1.) Thus it is quite apparent that the *Upanishad* advises the knower of Brahman to protect the Self through the renunciation of action. Therefore it would not be proper for the *Upanishad* to reiterate the necessity of renunciation of action for the illumined person, who is, anyway, beyond all injunctions. The *Iśa Upanishad* hesitates to advise the *jñāni* about the renunciation of his duty.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Embodiment is the result of ignorance.

<sup>16</sup> The *jñāni* has realized the unsubstantiality of the universe. He knows his identity with the non-dual Brahman. For him the renunciation of action is natural and spontaneous; it is not necessary for scripture to instruct him about it. Therefore the *Upanishad* does not directly give such instruction. But in order to proclaim the greatness of the Knowledge of Brahman, the *Upanishad*



idea is that a *jñāni* may engage, all through life, in various actions, good or bad. He need not remain inactive for fear of being entangled in the fruit of his actions. Even though he is engaged in what he considers to be his duty, because of having the Knowledge of Brahman he will not reap an adverse fruit from their performance, that is to say, he will not be deprived of the Knowledge of the Self. In other words, unlike the ignorant, he will not be entangled in *samsāra* on account of his performance of either good or evil action.<sup>17</sup> A *jñāni* is never deprived of his Knowledge as a result of action and never becomes entangled in the world, because he performs all action surrendering the fruit to God. Such action is done in a spirit of non-attachment.

The following scriptural passages support this view:

"Knowing It, one is not touched by evil action." (Br. Up. IV. iv. 23.)

"Sin does not touch such a person." (Chh. Up. IV. xiv. 3.)

"Things done or not done do not trouble him." (Br. Up. IV. iv. 22.)

"All his sins are consumed [in the fire of Knowledge]." (Chh. Up.

V. xxiv. 3.)

To quote from the *Linga Purāna*:

"The fire of Knowledge consumes all actions."

"There is no doubt that the activities of the *jñāni* are completely consumed, without leaving any fruit behind. Even though he may play with sins of various kinds, yet he remains unaffected thereby."

To quote from the *Śivadharmottara*:

"The wise man severs quickly and completely, by means of the sword of Knowledge, the shackles created by conscious or unconscious action and dwells in the Pure Self. As a vast, roaring fire consumes wood, both dry and wet, so the fire of Knowledge destroys, in a moment, all good and evil actions. As a lotus leaf is not contaminated by water, though floating on it, so the knower of the Self is not contaminated by sound, touch, taste, etc. As a snake-charmer possessing the mantra

says that the *jñāni* is absolutely free and beyond all imperatives. He is not compelled to work, but of his own volition he may engage in action, the good or bad results of which will not touch him. He may abstain from action, if he so desires, and this, too, will not harm him.

<sup>17</sup> It must not be forgotten that this and the following scriptural passages do not permit the knower of the Self to indulge in sinful action. Unless he has already acquired purity of heart through renouncing wicked thoughts and actions, he cannot obtain Self-Knowledge. After attaining such Knowledge he can never, even unconsciously, perform a wicked deed. The purpose of the passages quoted here is to emphasize the power and glory of Knowledge.



power is not bitten by snakes, though playing with them, so the knower of the Self is not injured by the snakes of the sense-organs, though playing with them. As poison which has been swallowed by a man is digested through the power of mantra and medicine, so the sins of the wise are consumed instantaneously through the power of Knowledge."

Vyāsa, in the *Brahma Sūtras* (III. iv. 1.), speaks of Knowledge as the means to the Highest Good. In that sūtra he asks: "What is the means to the attainment of Liberation? Is it action or Knowledge?" Then he replies that Knowledge alone is the means to Liberation, because that is the purport of the Vedas. When the opponent raises the objection (III. iv. 2.) that all actions are dependent upon such factors as the doer and the deity, and therefore the doer and the deity are the necessary auxiliaries of action, and consequently the scriptures prescribing Knowledge are of secondary and not primary importance, Vyāsa replies (III. iv. 8.) that Brahman is free from all phenomenal characteristics, such as the idea of agency etc., and is unsmitten by sin. One who is desirous of realizing the Knowledge of Brahman must cultivate Knowledge, which endows one with these qualities. Whoever pursues the discipline of action belongs to the phenomenal universe, which is created by ignorance and characterized by action, agency, and result. The Knowledge of Brahman destroys all these and therefore the performance of action is not possible for the knower of Brahman. The *Brahma Sūtras* discuss Knowledge and action in two different sections. The results of Knowledge and action are not the same, but different.<sup>18</sup> Therefore they are not to be treated as alternatives [for the attainment of the Highest Good], nor are they to be harmonized as fulfilling the same purpose, nor is the one to be treated as an auxiliary of the other. Vyāsa concludes (III. iv. 25.) by saying that Knowledge alone is the means to the Highest Good. Knowledge, in order to bestow that fruit, does not depend upon any action, which latter is prescribed for a particular stage of life and requires fire, firewood, etc. as its auxiliaries.<sup>19</sup> In other words, Knowledge serves its purpose independent of any action laid down for people belonging to different stages of life.

<sup>18</sup> The fruit of action is the enjoyment of happiness in heaven, etc., and that of Knowledge is Liberation, which means the cessation of phenomenal enjoyments.

<sup>19</sup> By the word action here is meant sacrificial action, which is obligatory for householders.

From what has been said it must not be concluded that action is altogether useless for the acquisition of Knowledge. Though once Knowledge is acquired it does not depend upon anything else to bring about Liberation, yet there is a necessity for action as a prerequisite for Knowledge. The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad (IV. iv. 22.) says that one should desire to know Brahman by means of sacrifices. Thus the utility of action is affirmed. Brahma Sūtras III. iv. 13. states that action does not apply to the man of Knowledge. According to Brahma Sūtras III. iv. 14. action is mentioned for the purpose of glorifying Knowledge; in other words, it is not obligatory for a man of Knowledge to perform action.

Through the reasoning and the scriptural passages given above, it is established that Knowledge alone is the means to Liberation. Therefore it is in the fitness of things that the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad should undertake to instruct aspirants about the Knowledge of Brahman.

Objection: If the bondage of the jiva is unreal, then it can be destroyed by Knowledge alone, and one can also expect to attain Immortality through Knowledge. But the unreality of the jiva's bondage has not yet been established. The bondage, or the world of multiplicity, is a matter of universal perception. Secondly, its unreality has not been proved. Thirdly, one becomes aware of Ātman only by means of such concepts as "I" and "you." No one can ever be conscious of Ātman without such concepts. There is no other entity similar to Ātman, which transcends all concepts. Similarity alone is the basis of superimposition. In the absence of such similarity no superimposition is conceivable. Therefore bondage, or samsāra, cannot be described as unreal.<sup>20</sup>

Reply: One perceives both real and unreal objects. Perception being the common factor of both, an entity cannot be called real simply because it is perceived.<sup>21</sup> An entity cannot be called real because its unreality is not perceived. It is possible for an entity to be unreal [though its reality is perceived] both on scriptural and on rational grounds. Thus the unreality of the phenomenal world is directly as-

<sup>20</sup> According to Non-dualistic Vedānta, Ātman is one and without a second. Jīvahood, which creates the idea of multiplicity and brings about bondage, is superimposed upon Ātman through avidyā. The objector states that the ātman (self) cannot possibly exist without the non-ātman (non-self, or "you"). Further, when there exist two similar things, such as a snake and a rope, the one can be superimposed on the other. If there exists no other entity similar to the transcendental Ātman, how is superimposition possible?

<sup>21</sup> An unreal object like a mirage is perceived under certain conditions; but the water of the mirage is not real.

serted by the scriptures, which also speak of it as unreal on account of its being the result of *māyā*.<sup>22</sup>

This is known from the following scriptural passages:

"There is not that second thing . . ." (Br. Up. IV. iii. 23.)

"The One alone is real; there is no second. How so? When Truth is known, no knowable exists." (Subāla Upanishad V. 15.)

"There is only one, which is without a second." (Chh. Up. VI. ii. 1.)

"The difference being only in a name, arising from speech." (Chh. Up. VI. i. 5.)

"The One alone is real; therefore there exists no multiplicity in the universe." (Adhyātma Upanishad 63.)

"Reality is to be known as one alone."

"Know, then, that *prakṛiti* is *māyā*." (Śvet. Up. IV. 10.)

"Brahman projects the universe through the power of Its *māyā*." (Śvet. Up. IV. 9.)

"Indra (the Supreme Lord), through *māyā*, assumes diverse forms." (Ri. VI. xlvii. 18.)

To quote from the Bhagavad Gītā:

"Though I am unborn and eternal by nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, subjugating My *prakṛiti*, I accept birth through My own *māyā*." (IV. 6.)

"It is indivisible, and yet It is, as it were, divided among beings." (XIII. 16.)

To quote from the Brahma Purāṇa:

"Such imaginary traits as birth and death, pleasure and pain, merit and demerit, do not, certainly, exist in the Purusha, who is Ultimate Reality. The Purusha is also free from the castes, the stages of life, and life in heaven and hell. The unreal world appears, through *māyā*, to be real, like the water in a mirage or the silver in an oyster-shell [on a moonlit night] or a snake in a rope on the floor at night. Other illustrations of similar illusions are the seeing of two moons in the sky by a person suffering from the eye affliction called *timira*, or of blueness, density, brilliance, etc. in the sky. As the non-dual sun appears to be many when reflected in waves, so the non-dual Supreme Self appears variously through diverse *upādhis*. Duality is imagined through ignorance and is not real. Those who, through ignorance, identify the body with *Ātman*, create a prison-house in the world to come.<sup>23</sup> All phe-

<sup>22</sup> Since *māyā* is unreal, the product of *māyā* is also unreal.

<sup>23</sup> I.e. they are entangled in the chain of rebirth.

nomenal experiences are included in the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The whole universe is included in these three states. The Lord deludes Himself by His own *māyā* in the form of duality; it is He, again, who realizes the Godhead, His own Self, dwelling in the cave of His heart. As lightning with its forked flames is seen in the sky in various forms, so also is seen in diverse ways the manifold creation which is projected from Vishnu by His inscrutable *māyā*.

"The nature of the world of duality is such that when the mind becomes peaceful,<sup>24</sup> the Lord appears as all peace, and when the mind becomes turbulent and stupefied,<sup>25</sup> the Lord appears as turbulent and stupid. But never does one perceive the real nature of the Godhead in the phenomenal universe. As the modifications of iron, of a ball of clay, or of gold are only apparent and not real, so the diversity of the creatures, living and non-living, is only apparent, and not real.<sup>26</sup> The world of duality inheres in the all-pervading *Ātman*, which *Itself* is without any other support [as a mirage inheres in the desert]. *Avidyā* (the power of the Lord) creates two kinds of entities: subtle and gross. Though *avidyā* rests in the Lord, yet it cannot touch Him. There is no rope in the [illusory] snake, nor is there a snake in the rope; likewise, there is no reason for the creation or destruction of the universe.<sup>27</sup> This *avidyā*, again, is imagined from the empirical standpoint. *Avidyā* is both one and dual, real and unreal; it is called the Great Enchantress.

"Always meditate on Brahman as non-dual, without parts, and complete. The knower of the Self overcomes grief and fear. He is not

<sup>24</sup> I.e. when the mind comes under the influence of *sattva*.

<sup>25</sup> I.e. when it comes under the influence of *rajas* and *taṃas*, respectively.

<sup>26</sup> What distinguishes the gold or iron from their products, such as a bracelet or a sword, are mere names and forms. A bracelet is really the gold associated with a name and a form. The name by which a form or modification is designated is a mere figure of speech, a verbal expression coined to serve a purpose in man's practical life. Names and forms are *māyā*. Just as the clay, remaining the same, appears as a jar, so also Brahman, remaining the same, appears as the living and non-living beings constituting the world of duality.

<sup>27</sup> One cannot speak of the real birth and death of what is unreal and non-existent. Through ignorance one sees a snake in a rope; but the idea of the snake disappears when the true nature of the rope is known. The appearance and disappearance (i.e. birth and death) of the snake are imaginary, and not real. They are based upon an illusion. Likewise, the creation, preservation, and destruction of the unreal world are imaginary, and not real. One cannot show any cause or reason for such creation, preservation, and destruction.

afraid in the presence of death, nor is he afraid of death itself. Nothing in the world can frighten him. The Self neither is born nor dies; neither is It killed nor is It the killer. It is not bound, nor does It cause bondage to anyone. It is not liberated, nor does It bestow Liberation upon others.

"The jiva is really the Supreme Self; anything besides the Supreme Self is illusory. The world is created by *māyā*, the inscrutable power of the Lord, and is therefore unreal. Realize this, give up all imagining, and desist from attachment to material objects. Having renounced illusions, the yogi should make his mind steady in the Self and remain calm, like fire that has consumed its fuel.

"*Māyā*, or primordial nature, is divided into twenty-four cosmic principles.<sup>28</sup> From *māyā* arise lust, anger, greed, delusion, fear, grief, and the whole nest of phantasms, and also the notions of righteousness and unrighteousness, pleasure and pain, creation and destruction, heaven and hell, births in various bodies, the different stages of life, attachment and aversion, diverse physical afflictions, boyhood, youth, and old age, union and separation, enjoyment, repulsion, and penances. Endowed with this knowledge, the wise man should renounce all and live like a muni, taking the vow of silence."

To quote from the Vishnu-dharma, a treatise of six chapters:

"The jiva, which is called the knower of the field,<sup>29</sup> under the spell of beginningless *māyā* finds itself different from Brahman, which is really one with it. As long as it differentiates itself from the Supreme Self and from other beings, so long does it wander in the universe, being impelled by its own action. But the jiva whose action has come to an end regards itself as non-different from the supreme Pure Brahman and thereby becomes immortal.

"All action is ignorance, and its opposite is Knowledge. A creature is bound by action and liberated by Knowledge. Non-duality is the Highest Good; duality is quite different from that Good. All such differentiations as men, animals, insects, and the dwellers in hell are created by false knowledge. Dualistic perceptions such as 'I am different from

<sup>28</sup> The cosmic principles are as follows: prakṛiti, consisting of sattva, rajas, and tamas; mahat (the cosmic mind); ahaṁkāra (I-consciousness); the five rudimentary elements (sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell); the eleven sense-organs (the mind, the eyes, the ears, the skin, the tongue, the nose, the hands, the feet, the organ of speech, and the organs of generation and evacuation); and the five gross elements (ākāśa, air, fire, water, and earth). Through the agency of these twenty-four principles *māyā* creates the universe.

<sup>29</sup> I.e. the body. (See B.G. XIII.)



others,' 'Others are different from me,' and 'This is mine and this belongs to others,' are mere ignorance.

"Now hear about Non-duality, which is the Supreme Truth. It is free from the consciousness of 'I' and 'mine,' and also from all other illusory ideas. It is experienced as changeless and inscrutable. Duality is an illusion and Non-duality is Ultimate Reality. Mental states are caused by dharma and its opposite. They should be restrained. When the mind is restrained, duality is not perceived. The whole universe of the living and the non-living is only imagined by the mind. When the mind is controlled, one realizes the absence of duality.

"Brooding or pondering on action is the obstacle to the Knowledge of Brahman. As one ponders, so one understands. When this pondering stops, the Supreme Brahman is revealed without effort. O leader of men, the division between man and the Supreme Self is imagined through ignorance. When this ignorance is destroyed their non-difference becomes evident. Ātman united with the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*<sup>30</sup> is called the knower of the field. Dissociated from the *gunas*, It is called the Supreme Self."

To quote from the Vishnu Purāṇa:

"O Lord of the universe! O Supreme Self! Thou alone dost exist; all else is unreal. By Thy glory the whole universe of the living and the non-living is pervaded. The tangible universe perceived by the unilluminated is nothing but Thyself, O Embodiment of Knowledge! People see it otherwise on account of ignorance. Non-discriminating men see the universe, which is Knowledge itself, as material, and therefore wander in *samsāra*. But the wise, of pure heart, realize the universe to be the embodiment of Knowledge; they regard it as the manifestation of Thy supreme majesty.

"He who knows that he is Hari, the Godhead, and that the universe characterized by cause and effect is non-different from himself, is not afflicted by the pairs of opposites, nor is he born again in *samsāra*.

"Brahman, which is Knowledge, supremely stainless, and the Highest Good, appears as material objects on account of ignorance. The Lord, who appears to be endowed with endless forms and who is Knowledge Absolute, has never become the material objects. From Him are projected such differentiated objects as mountains, oceans, and the earth, only through imagination. [The only entity that is real is the Lord, who

<sup>30</sup> The *gunas*, known as *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, constitute *prakṛiti*, or nature. (See Self-Knowledge, pp. 52-54.)

is eternal and infinite.] Is there any object which is without beginning, middle, or end, and which is always the same, O brāhmin?<sup>31</sup>

"Again, it is not really true that one object is seen to be transformed into another. The very idea of change is illusory. So where is there a material object? Those who, as a result of their own action, are bereft of true Knowledge of the Self, first see clay, then a pot, then its two separate parts [i.e. upper and lower], and finally potsherds, dust, etc. Tell me, please, which one of these is an unchanging entity? Therefore there never exists a material object except in one's mind. What truly exists is Consciousness alone, regarded diversely by different men endowed with different minds as a result of their respective past actions. There exists only Vāsudeva,<sup>32</sup> the best of all and the Supreme Lord, who is non-dual Consciousness, pure, stainless, griefless, and free from attachment and aversion.

"Thus I have related to you the foundation of the universe. I have also told you that Knowledge alone is real, and all else unreal. And further, I have told you about human conduct in the sense-perceived world.

"All actions are the result of ignorance. All living beings engage in activity. But Ātman is pure, immutable, tranquil, free from the *gunas*, and beyond *prakṛiti*. It is the same Ātman that dwells in all creatures, without undergoing any increase or decrease. That alone is Substance which at no time is known by a different name as a result of change or modification. O King, what is this Substance?

"O best among men, if there existed someone else other than myself, then I could speak of this as 'I' and that as 'he.' But since the same Person dwells in all bodies, what is 'I' and what is 'he'? Such epithets as 'I' and 'he' are only meaningless jargon. That you are a king, that this is your palanquin, that these are your bearers, that these are your people—all this is illusion. King, warrior, kingship, and other similar concepts used in practical life are all unreal—mere imagination.

"O King, I will tell you in brief what the wise describe as the immortal Supreme Truth. Listen:

"Ātman is non-dual, all-pervading, the same in all creatures, pure, attributeless, beyond *prakṛiti*, and free from the changes of birth and growth. O King, this same Ātman, which is supremely great and is

<sup>31</sup> One of the tests of Reality is its immutability. That which is real can never be unreal. (See B. G. II. 16.)

<sup>32</sup> The Godhead; an epithet of Sri Krishna.



Knowledge Absolute, has never been associated with name or caste; neither is It associated now with them nor will It be so in the future. It has always the same relationship with all bodies;<sup>33</sup> this relationship does not from time to time undergo change. This is the highest knowledge. The dualists are victims of false knowledge. The whole universe is nothing but the non-dual Brahman; it is free from differentiation. It is of the same nature as the Supreme Self, called Vāsudeva, and has no existence apart from Him. A spiritual aspirant named Nidāgha received the teaching of non-dualism, became devoted to it, and as a result realized all beings to be non-different from himself. By attaining oneness with Brahman he realized final Liberation.

"As the ignorant regard the sky [which is free from colour] as white, blue, etc., so, on account of erroneous perception, do people see the non-dual Ātman differently.

"Whatever is perceived in the universe is the immutable Lord alone; there exists nothing that is other than He. I am He; thou art He; all that exists is He. Give up the delusion of separateness.

"The great king, as a result of this instruction, gave up the notion of separateness and attained insight into the Supreme Truth. He recovered the memory of his past births, obtained final illumination, and became liberated in this very body."

To quote from the Linga Purāṇa:

"That the embodied beings wander about in saṁsāra is the result of ignorance. If one reasons one finds no difference between Ātman, which is free, and the jiva, which appears to be dependent. In truth, there is no such thing as one; where then, alas, is the possibility of two?<sup>34</sup> Neither is there one nor is there mortal man; where then is the possibility of death?<sup>35</sup>

"Turiya is not that which is conscious of the inner (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the outer (objective) world, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass of consciousness. It is not simple consciousness, nor is It unconsciousness.<sup>36</sup> When Brahman

<sup>33</sup> I.e. It is the indwelling Spirit of all.

<sup>34</sup> Two is a correlative of one.

<sup>35</sup> Brahman, by nature, is free from all actions and attributes. Therefore It cannot be associated with such adjectives as one or two. Death is predicated of what is born. Brahman does not come into existence from a previous state of non-existence. Therefore It is free from such notions as birth and death.

<sup>36</sup> The word *Turiya* means Pure Consciousness free from all qualifying attributes. The gist of this passage, based upon *Mā. Up* 7, is that Brahman, bereft of all attributes, is wholly inscrutable to the finite mind.

is known, nothing else remains to be known; then one realizes Nirvāṇa as the highest good to be attained. When afflicted with ignorance, one sees multiplicity in place of the non-dual Brahman, just as one sees double when afflicted with *timira*,<sup>27</sup> there is no other reason for the perception of multiplicity. O brāhmins, one cannot predicate, with reference to Ātman, either knowledge or bondage or Liberation. There is neither prakṛiti nor its changes nor the jiva, which is called a modification of prakṛiti; all this is māyā, which cannot be described as real or unreal."

The sage Parāśara states the same thing:

"The universe is projected from the Great Lord; in Him it merges again. He, the Lord of māyā, accepts the bondage of māyā and assumes diverse forms. But in reality He is not entangled in saṃsāra, nor does He entangle anyone else. He is neither a doer of action nor an experiencer of the result of action, neither a man nor a woman, neither māyā nor the vital breath; in reality He is pure Consciousness. Therefore the phenomenal nature of embodied beings is the result of ignorance.

"Ātman is essentially all-pervading, immutable, and free from blemishes. It is non-dual but appears to be diverse through the power of māyā; It is not so in Its own nature. Therefore sages speak of Non-duality as Ultimate Truth and the wise describe the universe as Knowledge Absolute. People with distorted vision see, because of ignorance, objects to be enjoyed. Ātman, which is by nature Consciousness, immutable and free from attributes, is perceived as material objects by men of defective understanding. When they truly realize Ātman as Ultimate Reality, and duality as unreal, they will attain peace. Therefore neither multiplicity nor the phenomenal universe exists, but Consciousness alone."

Thus the Vedas as well as the Smritis speak of the phenomenal universe, characterized by names and forms, as a mere assemblage of words, and therefore unreal. It is, in itself, unreal because of its constant changeability. Brahman, on the other hand, is described by the negation of attributes; It is therefore eternally real. The phenomenal universe, endowed with such positive attributes as grossness and subtlety, is completely other than Brahman. Therefore it must be unreal. To give an illustration: since there is only one moon, the seeing of two moons is an illusion.

<sup>27</sup> A kind of eye disease which distorts one's vision.

In the *Brahma Sūtras* (III. ii. 11.), Vyāsa denies, on the authority of scripture, the existence of two aspects<sup>28</sup> in Brahman due to its association with upādhis. Since the two aspects are contradictory, Vyāsa concludes that Brahman is without differentiation. When the opponent quotes scriptural passages apparently showing the existence of differentiation in Brahman and seeks to prove the reality of its differentiated aspects, Vyāsa says (III. ii. 12.) that scripture itself refutes the differentiations in Brahman, pointing out that they are the result of association with upādhis and that therefore the differentiated aspects of Brahman are unacceptable. Hence it stands to reason, Vyāsa concludes (III. ii. 13.), that Brahman is free from differentiations.<sup>29</sup>

Further, Vyāsa states that according to certain recensions of the Vedas Brahman is undifferentiated Reality and nothing else. He quotes many passages to show that the scriptures do not support differentiation:

"By the mind alone is Brahman to be realized. There exists in It no diversity whatsoever. He who sees in It diversity, as it were, goes from death to death." (Br. Up. IV. iv. 19.)

"Brahman is to be known as one alone."

"The enjoyer, the objects of enjoyment, and the Ruler—the triad . . . is nothing but Brahman." (Svet. Up. I. 12.)

Thus the scriptures speak of the phenomenal universe, characterized by the triad of the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, and the Ruler, as nothing but Brahman, strengthening the view that Brahman is really free from all differentiation.

The following objection may be raised: Granting that Brahman cannot have two aspects, because It is non-dual only, how can this prove that Brahman is devoid of forms? It may very well be endowed with the aspect of many forms.

In answer Vyāsa contends (Br. Su. III. ii. 14.) that the conclusion of the scriptures is that Brahman is formless. This is because the scriptural passages describing the formlessness of Brahman reveal its primary aspect.

To quote the scriptures:

"It (Brahman) is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long; It is soundless, formless, and immutable."

<sup>28</sup> Namely, Brahman endowed with attributes and the attributeless Brahman.

<sup>29</sup> The conclusion of the Upanishad is that Brahman in its real nature is free from any characteristics and differentiations. The apparent differentiations are due to its association with upādhis. This association is the result of māyā and therefore unreal. Hence no differentiation can exist in Brahman.

"*Ākāśa (matter) alone is the bearer of names and forms; that which is within them is Brahman.*" (Chh. Up. VIII. xiv. 1.)

"*That Brahman is untouched by cause and effect, without interior or exterior. This Ātman is Brahman, the experiencer of all things. Such is the instruction of the Vedas.*" (Br. Up. II. v. 19.)

Passages like these lay emphasis on the Brahman devoid of phenomenal multiplicity. Other passages in the scriptures describe the Causal Brahman<sup>40</sup> and not Brahman as It essentially is. The passages speaking of the primary Brahman are necessarily stronger than those which speak of the secondary Brahman, which is the Causal Brahman. Therefore Brahman should be known as being free from differentiations, and not otherwise, such being the clear evidence of the Vedas. In this way Vyāsa establishes the undifferentiated nature of Brahman.

If that be so, the opponent contends, then what will be the fate of the scriptural passages describing Brahman endowed with forms? In reply, Vyāsa says (Br. Su. III. ii. 15.) that as the luminous sun and moon, when reflected in water and similar substances, appear in diverse forms, so also Brahman, in association with upādhis, assumes various forms. These forms, associated with Brahman, are helpful for worship for beginners. Therefore the instruction about Brahman with form does not conflict with that about the formless Brahman.

Thus, after establishing the usefulness of the scriptural passages which speak of the many forms of Brahman as related to Its various upādhis, Vyāsa finally concludes (Br. Su. III. ii. 16.) that Brahman is undifferentiated only, and nothing else. In order to clinch the argument, he quotes the scriptural passage, "As a lump of salt tastes salty only, both inside and outside, so Ātman, devoid of exterior or interior, is a mass of Consciousness" (Br. Up. IV. v. 13.), and reiterates the fact that Brahman has no other aspect except that of Consciousness.

Quoting both the Vedas and the Smritis, Vyāsa proves (Br. Su. III. ii. 17.) that the nature of Brahman is utterly free of all differentiation:

"Now, therefore, follows the description [of Brahman]: 'Not this, not this.'" (Br. Up. II. iii. 6.)

"It (Brahman) is different from the known; It is above the unknown." (Ke. Up. I. 4.)

<sup>40</sup> Brahman in association with māyā becomes the cause of the universe and is called the Causal Brahman, which is endowed with the attributes of creation, preservation, and destruction, and also with those of omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc. Creation, which is māyā, is not an inalienable characteristic of Brahman.

"Words come back, together with the mind, unable to know Brahman." (Tai. Up. II. 4.)

"That Knowledge which is utterly free from all differentiations and unknowable by words, which is realized as Existence only and known through the [purified] understanding, is called Brahman. The nature of the Supreme Brahman is the complete opposite of that of the variegated universe."

Vyāsa further emphasizes the undifferentiated nature of Brahman by stating (Br. Su. III. ii. 18.) that It is Pure Consciousness, It is characterized by the negation of all attributes, It is higher than the known and other than the unknown, It is devoid of all multiplicity, and is completely other than the phenomenal universe. In order to show that the apparent differentiation in Brahman is the result of avidyā, the scriptures dealing with Liberation give the illustration of the reflections of the sun, moon, etc. in water:

"As the non-dual ākāśa (space) appears differently [as to form, odour, etc.] on account of its being limited by different pots, and as the sun appears differently on account of its being reflected in the water contained in different receptacles, so, likewise, Ātman manifests different forms on account of Its association with different upādhis."

"The inmost Ātman of embodied beings, though one, dwells in all beings. It appears to be many, like the moon and its many reflections." (Brahmabindu Upanishad 11.)

"The luminous sun, though one, assumes diverse forms when reflected in various forms of water; likewise, the birthless and effulgent Ātman, manifesting Itself through different bodies, assumes different forms."

In this way Vyāsa, by means of various illustrations, establishes the undifferentiated nature of Brahman.

It may be contended (Br. Su. III. ii. 19.) that if Ātman is incorporeal and all-pervading, It cannot dwell or be reflected in a gross body endowed with parts. The sun, on the other hand, is finite and corporeal; hence it can easily be reflected in a material medium. Since the illustration does not resemble the object with reference to which it is used, the illustration of the reflection of the sun in water is not apposite. In reply Vyāsa says (Br. Su. III. ii. 20.) that one should bear in mind only the common features between the illustration and the object illustrated. It is never intended that they should be the same in all respects; for in that case, the two becoming identical, the point of the illustration would

be lost.<sup>41</sup> In the illustration of the reflection of the sun in the water, the attention is drawn to the apparent changes in the reflection. That is to say, the reflected sun looks bigger when the volume of water increases, and smaller when the volume decreases; further, it trembles when the water trembles and appears to be divided when the water is divided. The sun assumes the characteristics of the water but is never affected by them. The apparent changes in the reflection do not affect the real sun. Likewise, Brahman remains essentially immutable, but appears to be endowed with such characteristics as increase or decrease on account of Its being associated with various upādhis. Thus the comparison between Brahman and the sun is to be confined only to certain common features, and not extended to all their aspects.

Vyāsa concludes the topic in the Brahma Sūtras (III. ii. 21.) by quoting the following scriptural passages:

"He made bodies with two feet and bodies with four feet;<sup>42</sup> that Supreme Being first entered the bodies as a bird (the subtle body)." (Br. Up. II. v. 18.)

"Indra (the Supreme Lord), through māyā, assumes diverse forms." (Ri. VI. xlvii. 18.)

"Know, then, that prakṛiti is māyā and that the Great God is the Lord of māyā." (Śvet. Up. IV. 10.)

"Brahman projects the universe through the power of Its māyā." (Śvet. Up. IV. 9.)

"The non-dual Ātman, dwelling in all beings, becomes different according to whatever It enters." (Ka. Up. II. ii. 10.)

"The non-dual and resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings." (Śvet. Up. VI. 11.)

"Piercing a hole in the top of the head, the Spirit enters the body by that passage."

"He enters the body and pervades it to the very tips of the finger-nails." (Br. Up. I. iv. 7.)

"After creating the body He entered into it." (Tai. Up. II. 6.)

Thus Vyāsa shows that the Supreme Brahman, essentially undifferentiated, appears to be differentiated only on account of Its association with upādhis of forms. The illustration of the sun and its reflections in water has already been given.

<sup>41</sup> When the strength of a man is explained by the illustration of a lion, the attention is to be focused only on the physical strength, which is the common feature. A man can never be a lion in all respects.

<sup>42</sup> I.e. bipeds and quadrupeds.



Furthermore, the experience of the knowers of Brahman refutes the reality of multiplicity. They have actually realized that the undifferentiated Brahman is the sole Reality. Now the following passages of the Vedas and the Smritis describe the unitive experience of Brahman:

"How can he who has attained the Knowledge of the unity of existence, through the realization of all beings in himself, suffer from any grief or delusion?" (Is. Up. 7.)

"When Brahman is known, nothing else remains to be known."

"This is the instruction about Nirvāṇa (Liberation)." (Ārunika Upanishad 5.)

"When there exists, as it were, another, then one can see another." (Br. Up. IV. iii. 31.)

"But when everything has become the Self, then what can one see and by what means will one see it?" (Br. Up. IV. v. 15.)

"O Lord, the tangible universe which we perceive is really Thyself, whose nature is Pure Consciousness. Those who are not yogis see the universe through false knowledge. But on the other hand, yogis endowed with right Knowledge and pure in heart perceive the universe as the form of the Supreme Lord, characterized by Consciousness. O brāhmin, a man called Nidāgha received the instruction about Non-duality and became devoted to the non-dual Brahman. At last he realized all beings, without exception, as the Self and attained Brahman and final Liberation. He who sees Ātman alone, and not a second object, has, according to the Vedas, become Brahman."

Thus the reality of the manifold universe is refuted by the evidence of the Vedas, the Smritis, and the experience of the knowers of Brahman.

It is seen that things utterly dissimilar and endowed with contrary attributes are often, through ignorance, identified with one another. A sweet substance is taken to be bitter, a yellow to be white, and vice versa. Sometimes one associates the incorporeal sky with greyness or a lower limit. The same mistake is made with regard to Ātman. The idea of the formless Self is falsely superimposed upon the body, which is endowed with a form and is, in reality, non-Self. The Self and the non-Self are utterly dissimilar in nature. That a man feels, "I am stout" or "I am thin" is a common experience.

"If the killer thinks he kills and if the killed man thinks he is killed, neither of these apprehends aright. The Self kills not, nor is It killed." (Ka. Up. I. ii. 19.)



"He who looks on the Self as the slayer, and he who looks on the Self as the slain—neither of these apprehends aright. The Self slays not nor is It slain." (B. G. II. 19.)

"All work is performed by the gunas of prakṛiti." (B. G. III. 27.)

From passages like these, quoted from Śruti and Smṛiti, one sees that on account of ignorance the characteristics of the Self are superimposed upon the non-Self, and vice versa.

The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad sets forth its teachings in order to remove this false superimposition so that the aspirant may attain the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman.

## INVOCATION

Om. That is full; this is full. This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Om. May Brahman protect us both! May Brahman bestow upon us both the fruit of Knowledge! May we both obtain the energy to acquire Knowledge! May what we both study reveal the Truth! May we cherish no ill feeling toward each other!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

For the interpretation of these two invocations see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 200 (*Iśa Upanishad*) and p. 116 (*Katha Upanishad*).



## CHAPTER I

RISHIS, discoursing on Brahman, ask: Is Brahman the cause? Whence are we born? By what do we live? Where do we dwell at the end? Please tell us, O ye who know Brahman, under whose guidance we abide, whether in pleasure or in pain.

RISHIS: Lit., seers of Truth; students of the science of Brahman.

IS BRAHMAN ETC: Is Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, the cause of the universe? Obviously Brahman, the Absolute, which is beyond time, space, and the causal relationship, cannot be the real cause. If that is so, Brahman must create the universe in co-operation with something else. What is this additional factor? The sentence may also be translated in other ways, for example: "Is Brahman [or something else] the cause of the universe?" "What is the nature of Brahman, the cause of the universe?" "What kind of cause is Brahman—material or efficient?"

WHENCE ETC: The word we denotes all beings (jivas) subject to the law of cause and effect. No birth or death is possible for the real jiva, which, in its true essence, is one with Brahman.

BY WHAT ETC: What supports the jivas during their phenomenal existence?

AT THE END: That is to say, after death.

UNDER WHOSE ETC: The jivas experience pleasure and pain in the world. Who is the controller of this pleasure and pain? The sharp division between pleasure and pain is evident. All beings are attached to pleasure and repelled by pain. Still it is seen that people experience pain. The question is, what that power or factor is which leads one to pain.

The questions asked in this verse are related to the creation, preservation, and ultimate dissolution of the jivas and the universe.

*Various entities—such as time, nature, etc.—may be proposed as the cause of the universe:*

### 2

Should time, or nature, or necessity, or chance, or the elements be regarded as the cause? Or he who is called the purusha, the living self?

The cause cannot be the combination of these entities, since there is a living self, ātman, for whose sake the combination has been made; yet neither is the ātman the cause, for it, in turn, is dependent upon good and evil.

**TIME:** It is time that causes change in all beings.

**NATURE:** The inalienable characteristic of an entity; for instance, the heat of fire.

**NECESSITY:** The law of cause and effect, which unfailingly determines good and evil.

**ELEMENTS:** Ākāśa, air, fire, water, and earth.

**THE PURUṢHA:** Ātman, as reflected in the buddhi, or limited by it; the individual living self, associated with body, senses, mind, and ego.

**THE CAUSE CANNOT ETC:** The entities enumerated cannot, independently, be the cause of the universe, for actual experience contradicts this view. Nor can their combination be the cause, for any combination presupposes another entity which brings together the different elements to serve its own purpose; for instance, a house, which is produced by the combination of different parts, serves the purpose of a living person.

**NEITHER IS THE ĀTMAN ETC:** The living self, or jiva, is dependent, in its phenomenal state, upon the karma, or action, of a former existence. Its happiness and suffering are determined by its past good and evil deeds. Being itself dependent, the ātman cannot be the independent cause of the universe. Or the text may be explained thus: The ātman cannot be the cause of the universe, for the latter is responsible for its suffering. It cannot be imagined that the ātman would create a universe which would cause its own suffering.

*It is not possible to discover the final cause of the universe by means of reason based upon sense experience. Therefore the seers pursued the path of yoga, which consists of self-control and one-pointedness of mind, and they came to the conclusion that the Supreme Lord evolved the world with the help of His own māyā.*

### 3

The sages, absorbed in meditation through one-pointedness of mind, discovered the [creative] power, belonging to the Lord Himself and hidden in its own gunas. That non-dual Lord rules over all those causes—time, the self, and the rest.

**ABSORBED ETC:** The Vedic seers discovered the ultimate cause through the help of yoga, that is to say, through self-control and meditation. Supramental truth cannot be known by any other means.

**POWER ETC:** The attributeless Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, which is beyond time, space, and causality, is the only Reality. Māyā is postulated from the relative standpoint to explain the creation. It is an inexplicable power which belongs to Brahman and has no existence independent of Brahman. They are inseparable, like fire and its power to burn. Brahman, when associated with māyā, is called Brahman with attributes (Saguna Brahman). His attributes are creation, preservation, and destruction. Māyā is the material cause of the universe; that is to say, Brahman creates the universe and the various objects contained in it, out of māyā, which is Its inferior aspect. But, as Pure Consciousness, It may be called the efficient cause. Thus, from the relative standpoint, Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. Vedānta explains this by the illustration of the spider and its web. The spider uses its own silk to produce the web. As a conscious entity it is the efficient cause of the web. The same spider, from the standpoint of the silk, which belongs to it, is the material cause. No outside material is needed for the creation of the universe. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 50 ff., and *Self-Knowledge*, p. 49 ff.)

**LORD:** The Sanskrit word *deva* means, literally, "self-luminous one"; it is used here to denote Saguna Brahman, the Lord of māyā or creation.

**HIDDEN ETC:** Māyā, also known as prakṛiti, consists of three gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. The word *guna* is generally—though incorrectly—translated as "quality." Essentially, the gunas are the very stuff of māyā. Māyā is like a twisted rope consisting of three strands, which are the three gunas. All that exists in the universe consists of these three gunas. Brahman, or the Great Spirit, after projecting the universe, remains hidden in it, just as a seed, after producing a tree, remains hidden in the tree. The cause produces the effect and remains concealed in the effect. First of all, Brahman is conceived as the Lord of māyā; next, the same Brahman is known as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe. The creative aspect, associated with sattva, is known as Brahmā; the protective aspect, associated with rajas, is known as Vishnu; and the destructive aspect, associated with tamas, is known as Śiva. These three aspects are related to the phenomenal world; they have no bearing upon the attributeless Brahman, or Ultimate Reality.

**RULES OVER:** Such secondary causes as time, the self, etc. are controlled by Brahman through māyā.

The first and second verses raise the following questions: Is Brahman the cause of the universe, or should time, or nature, or necessity, or some other factor, be considered as the cause? Can Brahman properly be called the cause, or is It devoid of causal relationship? Does Brahman, if It is the Creator, create the universe with outside help? If It is the cause, should It be regarded as the material cause or as the efficient cause? Or is It both efficient and material cause? Lastly, if Brahman is designated as the cause,

then what are Its characteristics; and if It transcends the causal relationship, then, too, what is Its nature? The answer is that the Pure Brahman is neither the cause nor something other than the cause, nor both, nor something other than both. Further, It is neither the efficient cause nor the material cause, nor both. Brahman is one and without a second, and devoid of any causal relationship. From the standpoint of the Absolute there is no creation; therefore Brahman cannot properly be described in terms of cause and effect. From the standpoint of the universe, however, Brahman with *māyā* appears to be associated with creation, preservation, and destruction.

*From the relative standpoint, Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. As the Lord of māyā, It is Īśvara; and in Its true nature, It is Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss. The same Brahman, again, appears as the universe bound by the causal chain. Cause and effect are essentially non-different. There is no real difference between a clay pot and the clay of which it has been made. It is the Supreme Brahman—birthless, deathless, attributeless, supersensuous, supramental, undifferentiated, and free from hunger, thirst, and the rest—that appears, through māyā, as the phenomenal universe. It is Brahman, again, who is worshipped by spiritual aspirants as Brahmā, Vishnu, Śiva, and other deities. From the phenomenal standpoint, the reality of the Creator and the universe—related as cause and effect—is admitted; otherwise there would be no meaning to bondage, Liberation, or seeker after Liberation. God, too, the bestower of Liberation, would be unreal. From the standpoint of māyā, all these are admitted to be real. Scripture says that one quarter of Brahman has become (through māyā) the universe and all its living beings, and the other three quarters remain immutable and transcendental. That Brahman, alone, has become all things is made clear by the illustration of a wheel. The universe is the Wheel of Brahman, the Brahmachakra.*

## 4

The sages saw the Wheel of Brahman, which has one felly, a triple tire, sixteen end-parts, fifty spokes with twenty counter-spokes, and six sets of eight; whose one rope is manifold; which moves on three different roads; and whose illusion arises from two causes.

**WHEEL OF BRAHMAN:** Refers to the universe, which is non-different from the Creator, who, again, is essentially the same as Brahman.



**FELLY:** The outer circumference of a wheel, which is its support. With regard to the universe, the word signifies the power of *māyā* in its causal aspect. At the time of the cosmic dissolution, names and forms return to the seed state; this is called the causal state of *māyā*.

**TRIPLE TIRE:** That is to say, three bonds or hoops, which form the tire. These are the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

**SIXTEEN END-PARTS:** Refers to the five elements, the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, and the mind. Or they may refer to the sixteen parts (*kalās*) mentioned in *Pr. Up. VI. 1*. These sixteen parts form the utmost extent of the universe. An altogether different interpretation is sometimes given. The one felly may mean the undifferentiated *prakṛiti*, which is the causal state. *Sutrāmā*, or *Hiranyagarbha* (the Cosmic Mind, or Consciousness conditioned by the totality of minds), and *Virāt* (Consciousness conditioned by the totality of bodies), together with the fourteen planes of existence described in the *Purāṇas*, form, in this interpretation, the sixteen end-parts.

**FIFTY SPOKES:** Which support the motion of the Wheel of the Cosmos. They are as follows: the five misconceptions, or different kinds of ignorance or doubt, described by Patanjali as ignorance, self-love, attachment, hatred, and clinging to life (*Yog. Su. II. 3*); the twenty-eight disabilities, or *asaktis*, which are causes of misconception (*Sām. Su. III. 38*); the nine inversions of satisfactions, or *tustis* (*Sām. Su. III. 39*); the eight inversions of perfections, or *siddhis* (*Sām. Su. III. 40*). Detailed descriptions of these terms will be found in *Sām. Su. III. 37-45*; *Sām. Kā. 47 ff*; *Yog. Su. II. 3 ff*.

**TWENTY COUNTER-SPOKES:** Refers to the ten organs (of perception and action) and their ten corresponding objects. They are the wedges to strengthen the spokes.

**SIX SETS OF EIGHT:** These octads are explained as the octad of *prakṛiti* (namely, *akāśa*, air, fire, water, and earth, mind, *buddhi*, and I-consciousness); that of the *dhatu*, or bodily substance (skin, cuticle, flesh, blood, fat, bone, marrow, and semen); the eight supernatural powers, endowed with which a man can make himself small as an atom, huge as a mountain, light as air, can reach any object he likes, rule everything he wants, conquer everything, and fulfil all desires; the octad of the *bhavas*, or states (righteousness, or *dharma*, knowledge, or *jñāna*, renunciation, majesty, unrighteousness, ignorance, non-renunciation, and poverty); the octad of gods and incorporeal beings (*Brahmā*, *Prajāpati*, deities, *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, *rākshasas*, *pitris*, fiends); and the octad of virtues (compassion, forgiveness, absence of malice, purity, absence of effort, goodness, liberality, and absence of longing).

**ONE ROPE ETC:** The rope of love, which manifests itself as love for children, food, and the heavenly world.

**THREE ETC:** These are the roads of righteousness, unrighteousness, and knowledge.

**WHOSE ILLUSION ETC:** This deception arises from two causes: virtuous action and sinful. On account of it one regards the body, or non-Self, as the Self.

The knowledge of the Wheel of Brahman was revealed to the illumined sages in the depths of meditation.

*The Causal Brahman, or Īvara, appearing, in association with māyā, as the phenomenal universe, is also described as a river:*

## 5

We meditate on the River whose five currents are the five organs of perception, which is made impetuous and winding by the five elements, whose waves are the five organs of action, and whose fountain-head is the mind, the source of the five forms of perception. This River has five whirlpools and its rapids are the fivefold misery; and lastly, it has fifty branches and five pain-bearing obstructions.

**FIVE ELEMENTS:** Ākāśa, air, fire, water, and earth, which are the elementary materials of the universe.

**MIND:** The basic organ (manas), responsible for the perceptions of the five sense-organs. According to Vedānta, the whole universe, consisting of animate and inanimate objects, is but the states of the mind; when the mind stops functioning the multiple universe is not perceived.

**FIVE WHIRLPOOLS:** The objects of the five senses.

**FIVEFOLD MISERY:** This consists in resting in the womb, being born, growing old, becoming ill, and dying.

**FIVE PAIN-BEARING ETC:** These are ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life. (See Yog. Sū. II. 3.)

The fifty branches mentioned in the text are not clear. They are not adequately explained by the commentators.

*The foregoing verses, by means of the illustrations of the wheel and the river, have described the Causal Brahman, which manifests Itself through the universe. Now is discussed the cause of bondage and the method of obtaining Liberation:*

## 6

In this great Brahma-Wheel, in which all things abide and finally rest, the swan (jīva) wanders about so long as it thinks the self is

different from the Controller. When blessed by Him the self attains Immortality.

IN WHICH . . . ABIDE ETC: All beings evolve from the Wheel of Brahman, that is to say, from Brahman with attributes, which is the cosmic form of the attributeless Brahman, or Pure Consciousness; they are supported by Him during the period of manifestation; and in the end they merge in Him. Brahman in association with māyā, which is Its creative power, appears to have become endowed with the attributes of creation, preservation, and destruction.

SWAN: The individual self.

WANDERS ABOUT: That is to say, the individual soul, the jiva, roams about in the phenomenal universe, assuming different bodies—human, subhuman, and superhuman.

SO LONG ETC: The cause of the jiva's wandering in saṃsāra is the mistaken notion, due to ignorance, that the individual soul is essentially different from the Supreme Self.

CONTROLLER: That is to say, the Supreme Lord, who is the Controller of the universe.

WHEN ETC: The discipline for Liberation is the knowledge of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Lord. The individual soul must realize itself to be the non-dual Brahman, the essence of Bliss and Consciousness, which is its true nature, and become absorbed in It.

He who knows himself to be Brahman, or Ultimate Reality, is liberated; and he who knows himself to be other than Brahman remains bound. "He who knows that he is Brahman becomes Brahman, the All. Even the gods cannot control him, for he realizes himself to be their inner self. But he who worships another God, regarding the latter as other than himself, does not know the truth. He remains as one of the beasts of the gods." (Br. Up. I. iv. 10.)

*The following objection may be raised: Verses 4-6 refer to the Causal Brahman, who manifests Himself as the universe. That being so, the realization of Brahman must mean oneness with the Causal Brahman. The contemplator becomes one with the object of contemplation, which, in this case, is Brahman with attributes. But the seeker who is one with the Causal Brahman is still identified with the relative universe. Therefore he cannot attain the Immortality described in the foregoing verse. The objection is refuted:*

It is the Supreme Brahman alone [untouched by phenomena] that is proclaimed [in the Upanishads]. In It is established the triad [of

the enjoyer, the object, and the Lord who is the Controller]. This Brahman is the immutable foundation; It is imperishable. The sages, having realized Brahman to be the essence of phenomena, become devoted to It. Completely merged in Brahman, they attain freedom from rebirth.

IT IS ETC: According to the Upanishads, the Supreme Reality is the attributeless Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, and not Saguna Brahman, associated with the phenomenal universe. If the Supreme Reality were Saguna Brahman, then Its attainment would not bring about Liberation. The attributeless Brahman transcends phenomena, which are limited by time, space, and causality. Compare: "It (Brahman) is different from the known; It is above the unknown" (*Ke. Up. I. 4*); "That which cannot be apprehended by the mind, but by which, they say, the mind is apprehended—That alone know as Brahman, and not that which people here worship" (*Ke. Up. I. 6*); "It is not gross; It is devoid of sound and touch"; "Now, therefore, follows the description [of Brahman]: 'Not this, not this.' " (*Br. Up. II. iii. 6*); "It is neither being nor non-being; It is, verily, all good"; "From which words come back" (*Tai. Up. II. 4*); "One and without a second" (*Chh. Up. VI. ii. 1*).

SUPREME: Because Brahman is free from all phenomenal characteristics. By contemplating the Supreme Brahman one attains the highest result, that is to say, Immortality. Whatever one contemplates one becomes.

IN IT ETC: If Brahman is untouched by prakṛiti (phenomena), and if the latter is independent of Brahman, then Brahman cannot be described as one and without a second. Brahman and prakṛiti would, in that case, constitute a duality. But this contention is not correct. Brahman, untouched by prakṛiti, is an independent reality; but prakṛiti has no independent existence. The enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, and the controlling Lord (Īśvara), which constitute prakṛiti, or the phenomenal universe, all inhere in Brahman. According to Vedānta, the whole universe is a manifestation of Brahman through māyā; it rests in Brahman during the period of manifestation, and in the end it merges in Brahman. The universe cannot exist independent of Brahman. This is explained by the illustrations of the illusory snake seen in the rope and the mirage seen in the desert.

FOUNDATION: Brahman is the foundation of the universe, as the rope is the foundation of the illusory snake.

IMPERISHABLE: Even after projecting the universe, Brahman remains immutable, because the universe is māyā, and so devoid of any real existence. The idea of causality, expressed by creation or becoming, is absent in Brahman.

THE SAGES ETC: Though Brahman is the essence or substratum of the

universe, yet It is unrelated to the latter, because the universe is an illusory superimposition upon Brahman. What is perceived by the ignorant as the phenomenal universe is realized by the sages to be Brahman, non-dual and all Bliss. Thus the sages attain Liberation.

**DEVOTED ETC:** This devotion to Brahman is called *śamādhi*, or the Knowledge of Non-duality through complete absorption. *Śamādhi* is thus described in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*: "The non-dual Brahman, the ultimate Cause, all Light, all Bliss, dwells in all beings. It is eternal and immortal. The individual self should meditate on It with single-minded devotion and be completely absorbed in It. This total losing of the self in the Supreme Self is called *śamādhi*. The aspirant should control the mind and the senses and concentrate on the Supreme Self. Fixing his attention on It, he must not think of anything else. Thus he loses himself in the indivisible Supreme Self, which is the inmost Consciousness of all, and becomes one with It."

**COMPLETELY MERGED ETC:** The sages merge the gross body in the subtle body, the subtle body in the causal body, and all three in Brahman, which is the unrelated substratum. The different bodies are projected by *māyā*.

**FREEDOM ETC:** The illumined sages become free from such fear and misery as resting in the womb, being born, growing old, becoming ill, and dying.

The purpose of Vedānta is to reveal the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, as expressed by the Upanishadic statement *Tat-tvamasi*—"That thou art." (*Chh. Up.* VI. viii. 7.) The word *That* has two meanings: a direct and an implied. The direct meaning conveys the idea of Saguna Brahman, or the World Soul, manifest as the universe, and called its Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. The implied meaning is Pure Consciousness unassociated with any limiting attributes. Likewise, the word *thou* has two meanings: a direct and an implied. The direct meaning conveys the idea of the jiva, or individual soul, associated with an individual body and characterized by the limitations of birth, death, hunger, thirst, etc. The implied meaning is Pure Consciousness unassociated with any limiting attributes. The meaning of the word *art* is the identity of *That* and *thou*. It is obvious that the words *That* and *thou*, possessing contradictory attributes, cannot be identical from the standpoint of the direct meaning of the words, that is to say, in a literal sense. But their identity is a fact realized through direct and immediate experience. This identity is therefore explained from the standpoint of their implied meaning. The contradictory attributes which distinguish *Īśvara*, or Saguna Brahman, from the jiva, or individual soul, are the result of *māyā* and therefore are not real. It is through *māyā* that Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, appears to have become the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe. Through

māyā, again, the same Brahman appears to have become the jiva. The superimpositions are illusory; their substratum alone is real. Brahman is the substratum of both Īvara and the jiva. When, through the Vedāntic discipline of negation, one eliminates the illusory superimpositions, one realizes by direct experience the ultimate identity of Īvara and the jiva in Brahman, or Pure Consciousness. Īvara and the jiva are both phenomenal entities. They may be compared to a clay lion and a clay mouse. Such a mouse and lion cannot be identical. But when both are dissolved into clay, all their differences due to the illusory names and forms are obliterated, and their essential oneness is realized. (See *Self-Knowledge*, p. 88 ff.)

*The following objection may be raised: If the non-dual Brahman alone is real, there can be no separate existence of Īvara and the jiva. In that case the scriptural passages speaking of the merging of the jiva in Brahman are meaningless. The answer is that during the relative state a distinction between Īvara and the jiva is admitted. This distinction is created by two kinds of limitation due to māyā. Īvara is associated with collective ignorance, and the jiva, with individual ignorance. With regard to Īvara, the whole universe is the limiting adjunct, whereas with the jiva, the individual body is the limiting adjunct. It is Brahman alone who, in association with collective māyā, appears as the universe, and in association with individual māyā, appears as the jiva. (See *Self-Knowledge*, p. 49 ff.) The destruction of ignorance constitutes freedom.*

## 8

The Lord, Īśa, supports all this which has been joined together—the perishable and the imperishable, the manifest (the effect) and the unmanifest (the cause). The same Lord (the Supreme Self), devoid of Lordship [i.e. as the jiva], becomes bound because of assuming the attitude of the enjoyer. The jiva again realizes the Supreme Self and is freed from all fetters.

**THE LORD:** Brahman, or Pure Consciousness.

**SUPPORTS:** The Lord is the support of phenomena, as the rope is the support of the illusory snake, or the desert, of the mirage. The universe is held together by cause and effect.

**PERISHABLE:** That is to say, manifested objects.

**IMPERISHABLE:** Īvara, who is the cause of manifestation. Brahman is



the support of all relative phenomena, which include both the tangible effects and the intangible cause, or *Īśvara*. Compare: "The perishable comprises all creatures, and the imperishable is said to be the unchanging. But there is another Being, the Highest, called the Supreme Self, who, as the Immutable, pervades and sustains the three worlds." (B. G. XV. 16-17.)

**DEVOID OF LORDSHIP ETC:** As a result of *avidyā*. Under the spell of *avidyā*, or nescience, the Supreme Self appears as the *jīva*, or phenomenal being, who, through association with the aggregate of the body, senses, etc., becomes individualized. This *jīva* is the doer of action and the enjoyer of its results.

**REALIZES ETC:** Through the destruction of *avidyā*.

The non-dual *Ātman*, through association with limiting adjuncts created by *avidyā*, appears to have become the multiple living beings. Vedāntists give the illustration of the reflections of the moon in waves. The ideas of bondage and Liberation, pleasure and pain, etc. do not affect Brahman. They are created by *māyā* and apply to phenomena, and therefore they are ultimately unreal.

## 9

The Supreme Lord appears as *Īśvara*, omniscient and omnipotent, and as the *jīva*, of limited knowledge and power, both unborn. [But this does not deny the phenomenal universe;] for there exists further the unborn *prakṛiti*, which creates [the ideas of] the enjoyer, enjoyment, and the object. *Ātman* is infinite and all-pervading, and therefore devoid of agency. When the seeker knows all these three to be Brahman, he is freed from his fetters.

**BOTH UNBORN:** Both *Īśvara* and the *jīva* are, in reality, Brahman, which is their substratum; therefore they are called unborn. It is the non-dual Self, the inmost *Ātman* of all beings, that has assumed all diverse forms.

**FOR THERE EXISTS ETC:** The following objection may be raised: The notion of the Supreme Lord's being omniscient, all-powerful, etc., and of the *jīva*'s being the opposite, can be accepted if the reality of the phenomenal universe, characterized by the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, etc., is admitted. But Non-dualistic Vedānta does not admit the reality of the phenomenal universe. The non-dual Brahman, which is by nature immutable, cannot be the enjoyer. Further, there cannot exist any other entity which can create in Brahman the notion of enjoyment. If the reality of such an object is admitted, the doctrine of non-dualism must fall. The non-dualist's answer is as follows: *Māyā*, or *prakṛiti*, the inscrutable power



of Brahman, is the cause of the phenomenal universe. It is māyā that transforms itself into the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, etc. Compare: "Know, then, that prakṛiti is māyā" (Śvet. Up. IV. 10); "Indra (the Supreme Lord), through māyā, assumes diverse forms" (Ri. VI. xlvii. 18). Māyā, as already stated, is the material cause of the universe. Being itself inert, māyā cannot function without the power of the Lord, who uses it as His instrument for creation, preservation, and destruction. On account of this association with māyā, the Lord Himself appears to be like a phenomenal entity, endowed, as it were, with a body, and divided, as it were, like a material substance. Thus, though the Supreme Lord is non-different from Brahman, nevertheless, on account of association with māyā, He appears as a phenomenal being. Further, by the admission of the concept of māyā, the non-duality of Brahman is not affected; for māyā has no reality independent of Brahman. It is described as neither real nor unreal. Since māyā is ultimately unreal, the ideas of the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, etc. are also unreal. For that reason, the non-dual, indivisible Brahman alone exists.

**INFINITE:** That is to say, free from the limitations of time, space, and other entities. Time, space, etc. are māyā.

**DEVOID OF AGENCY:** The ideas of agency, action, etc. belong to the phenomenal world, and not to the non-dual Brahman.

**ALL THESE ETC:** The ideas of the enjoyer, enjoyment, and the object of enjoyment are superimposed upon Brahman through māyā, as the snake is superimposed upon the rope. To the illumined person, the substratum is non-different from what is superimposed, that is to say, he sees the illusory snake (perceived by the ignorant) as the rope. Likewise, the ideas of the enjoyer, enjoyment, etc. are in reality nothing but Brahman. He who knows Brahman alone as Reality is free from all false conceptions. He sees Brahman everywhere and in everything. He rids himself of the false notions of the agent and the experiencer. Free from grief, he attains Supreme Bliss.

*The foregoing verse has shown the distinction between Īśvara and the jīva and has also stated that through the knowledge of the essential non-difference between Brahman and the universe one attains Immortality. Now will be shown the difference between Īśvara and prakṛiti.*

## 10

Prakṛiti is perishable. Hara, the Lord, is immortal and imperishable. The non-dual Supreme Self rules both prakṛiti and the individual soul. Through constant meditation on Him, by union with Him, by the

knowledge of identity with Him, one attains, in the end, cessation of the illusion of phenomena.

**HARA:** Lit., the Destroyer of ignorance. The word also signifies Śiva, or Rudra, one of the divine manifestations of Brahman in the phenomenal world. In this verse the word stands for the Supreme Lord.

**HIM:** That is to say, the non-dual Self, which is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

**UNION:** Union of the individual self and the Supreme Self.

**KNOWLEDGE ETC:** This identity is expressed in the scriptural statement "I am Brahman," and other similar passages.

**IN THE END:** That is to say, after the attainment of Knowledge. Or the word may mean "at the time of death," when the impressions created by the action done in a previous life, which have determined the present body, have been exhausted through experience. Though the subtle impressions of all other actions are destroyed by the Knowledge of Brahman, the action responsible for the present life must exhaust itself through experience.

**ILLUSION ETC:** The phenomenal life is characterized by pain, pleasure, and delusion.

*The result of the meditation, union, and Knowledge spoken of in the foregoing verse is described:*

# 11

When the Lord is known all fetters fall off; with the cessation of miseries, birth and death come to an end. From meditation on Him there arises, after the dissolution of the body, the third state, that of universal lordship. And lastly, the aspirant, transcending that state also, abides in the complete Bliss of Brahman.

**WHEN ETC:** When the aspirant attains oneness with Brahman.

**FETTERS:** Created by avidyā, or nescience.

**MISERIES:** Patanjali describes these as the five pain-bearing obstructions: ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life.

**FROM MEDITATION ETC:** The result of meditation is the attainment of Liberation by gradual stages, as described in the text.

**AFTER ETC:** The aspirant, after death, follows the Path of Light and attains Brahmaloka. (Compare B. G. VIII. 24.)

**THIRD STATE:** The first state represents the destruction of bondage; the second, the cessation of miseries; and the third, the attainment of supernatural powers in the highest heaven, or Brahmaloka.

TRANSCENDING ETC: In the end, the aspirant renounces all powers and remains satisfied with union with Brahman alone. He overcomes all desires, which are the result of māyā and belong to the phenomenal world.

One of the Smritis states: "From meditation one attains incomparable powers, and from these powers, great happiness. After renouncing that happiness through knowledge, one attains Liberation from all phenomena." Liberation through stages, as described in this verse, applies only to those who die before attaining complete identity with Brahman. But he who has realized his own self as Brahman becomes liberated in this very life. For him is destroyed for ever the illusion of birth and death and the whole of phenomenal existence.

*The aspirant realizes the Highest Good through the Knowledge of Brahman. Therefore he should withdraw his mind from all external objects and concentrate on the oneness of Brahman and the self.*

## 12

The enjoyer (jīva), the objects of enjoyment, and the Ruler (Īśvara)—the triad described by the knowers of Brahman—all this is nothing but Brahman. This Brahman alone, which abides eternally within the self, should be known. Beyond It, truly, there is nothing else to be known.

THE ENJOYER ETC: See I. 9.

BEYOND ETC: Compare: "Beyond the Purusha there is nothing: this is the end, the Supreme Goal." (Ka. Up. I. iii. 11.)

The true yogi sees the Godhead in the inner self and not in images. Ātman is self-luminous. Only those who are spiritually blind do not perceive It. Those who seek God in temples and holy places may be likened to unwise men who run after worthless pieces of glass, ignoring precious gems lying in the very palm of their hand. The Supreme Reality is the inmost Self of all beings. Therefore the aspirant should give up all futile imaginings and make the mind one-pointed in Ātman. A true yogi is like a fire of live coals, which is free from smoke and crackling sound. The state of the mind free from desires and imaginings, achieved through self-control, detachment, and concentration, is called samādhi.

*The following verse speaks of Om as the symbol of Ātman. The yogi communes with Ātman through Om. The method is repetition of the*

*word and meditation on its meaning. (See Yog. Su. I. 27.) This form of meditation is explained by the illustration of the sacrificial fire, which is ignited by the friction of two pieces of wood:*

## 13

The [visible] form of fire, while it lies latent in its source [the fire-wood], is not perceived; yet there is no destruction of its subtle form. That very fire can be brought out again by means of [persistent] rubbing of the wood, its source. In like manner, Ātman, which exists in two states, like fire, can be grasped in this very body by means of OM.

IS NOT PERCEIVED: Prior to the friction.

IN LIKE MANNER, ETC: Ātman remains unperceived during the state of ignorance, but becomes apparent through the repetition of OM.

TWO STATES: Namely, manifested and unmanifested.

The illustration of producing fire from fire-wood is taken from the Vedic sacrifice. Two pieces of fire-wood (arani), one placed above the other, were used in Vedic times to ignite the sacrificial fire. The fire, which is produced by friction, is not visible at first; yet it must have been in the fire-wood all the time. Its subtle form cannot be non-existent, because as the lower piece of wood (the source) is rubbed by the upper piece, sparks come out. The fire, produced by the rubbing of the wood, is compared to Ātman, which, though invisible during the state of ignorance, exists all the time and is revealed when the body is rubbed, as it were, by OM. The word *friction*, in this connexion, is the symbol of meditation. Through constant meditation on OM, the body becomes subdued, the mind stilled, and the vision of Ātman is revealed.

*The same idea is further explained:*

## 14

By making the body the lower piece of wood, and OM the upper piece, and through the practice of the friction of meditation, one perceives the luminous Self, hidden like the fire in the wood.

PRACTICE: Patanjali defines the word *practice* as the continuous struggle to keep the mind in a state of complete restraint. (Yog. Su. I. 13-14.) The practice becomes firmly grounded by long and constant efforts coupled with great love for the end to be obtained. It should be accompanied by vairāgya, or the giving up of attachment for objects either heard of or seen.

*The nature of Self-realization is explained by means of various illustrations:*

## 15-16

As oil [exists] in sesame seeds, butter in milk, water in river-beds, and fire in wood, so the Self is realized [as existing] within the self, when a man looks for It by means of truthfulness and austerity—when he looks for the Self, which pervades all things as butter [pervades] milk, and whose roots are Self-Knowledge and austerity. That is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad; yea, that is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad.

**OIL ETC:** The oil is extracted from sesame seeds by pressing them.

**BUTTER ETC:** The butter is obtained from milk by churning it.

**WATER ETC:** The water comes forth when the dry bed of the stream is dug. The reference is to certain rivers in India in which the water flows under the sandy bed.

**SO THE SELF ETC:** Ātman is realized within when the seeker negates the various sheaths—the physical, vital, mental, etc.—which are falsely associated with Ātman through avidyā. (For a description of the sheaths see *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 81-86.)

**TRUTHFULNESS:** Which consists in making a true report about things. Truthfulness must not be detrimental to the welfare of others. One should speak the truth and speak what is pleasant, but never an unpleasant truth.

**AUSTERITY:** Real austerity consists in fixing the mind and the sense-organs one-pointedly on Ātman.

**THE SELF, WHICH PERVADES ETC:** As butter is the essence of milk and pervades every particle of it, so Ātman—Pure Being, Consciousness, and Bliss—is the essence of all things and pervades them.

**ROOTS:** That is to say, the disciplines for realizing the Self.

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE:** Compare: "He . . . obtains Immortality through Knowledge." (*Is. Up.* 11.)

**AUSTERITY:** Compare: "Seek Brahman through austerity" (*Tai. Up.* III. 2 ff); "This Ātman is attained through unceasing practice of truthfulness, austerity, right knowledge, and continence (brahmacharya)" (*Mu. Up.* III. i. 5); "The stainless World of Brahman belongs to them in whom there is no crookedness, no falsehood, no deception" (*Pr. Up.* I. 16).

*Here ends the First Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER II

**MAY THE SUN**, at the commencement of yoga, join our minds and other organs to the Supreme Self so that we may attain the Knowledge of Reality. May He, also, support the body, the highest material entity, through the powers of the deities who control the senses.

**SUN:** Of all phenomenal objects, the sun was regarded with the greatest wonder and admiration by the ancients everywhere. In the Vedas the sun is described as the chief symbol of Brahman. The Gāyatri prayer is directed to the Purusha dwelling in the sun. Natural sunlight is a symbol of the light of the Spirit. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 86.)

**MINDS:** The mind, which is the inner organ, is the channel for knowledge. It acts like a goad in the hand of the mahout to keep the wild elephants of the senses under control. All the calamities in life are the result of weakness of mind.

**ORGANS:** According to Vedānta there are eleven organs, namely, the five organs of action, the five organs of perception, and the mind (manas or antahkarana). The word may also suggest here the knowledge of external objects. The purport of the prayer, in that case, is as follows: "May the senses as well as the knowledge of external objects all be directed to the revelation of the Supreme Self."

**BODY ETC:** All physical objects are modifications of material elements. The body, through which a man realizes the Supreme Truth, is their highest manifestation.

**POWERS OF THE DEITIES:** The sense-organs, consisting of material elements, are inert and unconscious. Therefore it is stated in Vedānta that they are animated and controlled by various deities, who represent, symbolically, different aspects of the all-pervading Consciousness. Thus, for instance, the sun is mentioned as the deity controlling the eye.

"May the Sun take our thoughts away from external things in order to concentrate them on the Supreme Self, and transmit to our organ of speech and other organs that power which lightens all objects and which inheres in Agni (Fire) and the other deities who control the various organs. Through the grace of the Sun we shall attain success in yoga." (*Śaṅk-arāchārya*.)

The first chapter has described yoga as the effective method of perceiving the inmost Self hidden in the body. The second chapter deals with the various disciplines of yoga. The purport of the text is as follows: "May the Sun first direct our minds to the Supreme Self; next, may He direct the cosmic forces which control the sense-organs to withdraw their powers from external objects; and lastly, may He direct our understanding from worldly thoughts to the Self dwelling within the body, so that we may contemplate the Knowledge of Ātman."

## 2

Having received the blessings of the divine Sun, and with minds joined to the Supreme Self, we exert ourselves, to the best of our power, toward meditation, by which we shall attain Heaven (Brahman).

HAVING ETC: By the blessings of the Sun the mind is fixed on Ātman, and by the powers of the deities who control the senses the body is strengthened.

HEAVEN: The word *Heaven* means, in this context, the Supreme Self and not the celestial realm. All forms of happiness, including that experienced in heaven, are only reflections of the Bliss of Brahman, which alone is everlasting.

## 3

May the Sun bestow favour upon the senses and the mind by joining them with the Self, so that the senses may be directed toward the Blissful Brahman and may reveal, by means of Knowledge, the mighty and radiant Brahman.

The devotee prays that the Sun, having directed the senses and the mind, which are moving toward Brahman, and which through Knowledge are about to reveal the mighty and radiant Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, may order them to do so. That is to say, he prays that, by the favour of the Sun, the senses may turn away from outer things to Brahman, or Ātman.

## 4

It is the duty of those brāhmins who fix their minds and senses on the Supreme Self to utter such lofty invocations to the divine Sun, omnipresent, mighty, and omniscient. For He, all-witnessing and non-dual, is the dispenser of sacrifices.



"Those brāhmins who withdraw their minds and sense-organs from outward objects and unite them with the Supreme Self should utter exalted praises for the omnipresent, all-knowing, and mighty Sun. For He, the non-dual Witness of all, is the dispenser of sacrifices." (Śankarāchārya.)

## 5

O senses, and O deities who favour them! Through salutations I unite myself with the eternal Brahman, who is your source. Let this prayer sung by me, who follow the right path of the Sun, go forth in all directions. May the sons of the Immortal, who occupy celestial positions, hear it!

**SALUTATIONS:** Includes worship and contemplation.

**MYSELF:** That is to say, the senses and the mind.

**SOURCE:** Cause or creator.

**WHO FOLLOW . . . :** **SUN:** Or the passage may be translated thus: "Who have attained samādhi (complete absorption) by following the right path of Knowledge."

**IMMORTAL:** Refers to Hiranyagarbha, who is endowed with the longest life among phenomenal beings. He lives as long as the cycle lasts.

*It has been stated in the foregoing verses that sacrifices should be performed after first propitiating the Sun. Then alone do they produce the desired result. Otherwise the sacrifices become only a means of enjoyment.*

## 6

[If sacrifices are performed without first propitiating the Sun,] then the mind becomes attached to sacrifices in which fire is kindled by the rubbing [of the pieces of fire-wood], the oblations are offered to the deity Vāyu, and the soma juice is drunk excessively.

**SOMA JUICE:** Which has an intoxicating effect. Those participating in such sacrifices may forget their real significance and indulge in excessive drinking.

*Another translation and interpretation of verse 6, following Śankarāchārya's commentary:*

Where Fire is kindled by rubbing, where the air is controlled, and where Soma is greatly revealed, there the perfect mind is produced.

**FIRE:** That is to say, the Highest Self, which is described as fire because it consumes ignorance and all its effects.

**KINDLED ETC:** This fire is kindled in the body by meditation on OM. (See I. 14.)

**AIR ETC:** Reference is here made to prāṇāyāma, or the restraint of the breath, as described in the Yoga treatises.

**SOMA ETC:** Soma, or the Moon, is the controlling deity of the mind, or inner organ. The meaning of the text is that the inner organ should be purified by means of spiritual disciplines.

**PERFECT MIND ETC:** That is to say, the mind takes the form of Brahman, non-dual, blissful, and perfect.

The aspirant should first perform the sacrifices and other rituals prescribed in the Vedas. Then he should practise breath-control and the other disciplines of Yoga, cultivate meditation, and finally realize the meaning of the great Vedic statements: "That thou art" (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7.*), "This Ātman is Brahman" (*Mā. Up. 2.*), and so on. Thus in the end he will attain Bliss and the Highest Good. A man accumulates sinful tendencies through unrighteous actions during many lives. As those tendencies gradually wear away, he feels inclined toward God. Then by the practice of austerity, study, and other disciplines for many lives, he rids himself of sin and develops loving devotion to God. Through love he at last attains Liberation.

*Therefore:*

7

Serve the eternal Brahman with the blessings of the Sun, the cause of the universe. Be absorbed, through samādhi, in the eternal Brahman. Thus your work will not bind you.

**CAUSE ETC:** The sun causes the growth of food, by which life is sustained.

**YOUR WORK:** Refers to the various philanthropic activities which a pious householder should perform. Such activities, which belong to the realm of avidyā, produce results and a man is reborn to reap them. The Knowledge of Brahman destroys avidyā and everything pertaining to it. "As fire, well kindled, reduces wood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of Knowledge reduce all works to ashes." (*B. G. IV. 37.*)

*The practice of yoga is described:*

8

The wise man should hold his body steady, with the three [upper] parts erect, turn his senses, with the help of the mind, toward the heart, and by means of the raft of Brahman cross the fearful torrents of the world.

WISE MAN: That is to say, the yogi.

THREE ETC: The chest, neck, and head. (See B. G. VI. 13; Yog. Su. II. 46.)

HEART: The heart is often described by the yogis as the "abode of Brahman." One feels there most vividly the presence of the Spirit. (See *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 102-103.)

THE RAFT OF BRAHMAN: The word *Brahman* here signifies OM. Repetition of the word and meditation on its meaning are prescribed. (See Yog. Su. I. 27-28.)

FEARFUL TORRENTS ETC: That is to say, the unenlightened life of the world. Such a life is maintained by ignorance, desires, and actions; it makes a person assume various bodies and prolongs his suffering in the phenomenal world.

The teachers of the Upanishads recommend the disciplines of Patanjali's yoga for the attainment of samādhi, in which the Knowledge of Brahman is directly realized. Mere intellectual knowledge gives only a mediate or indirect perception of Reality. But the knowledge of multiplicity created by ignorance is direct and immediate. Only the immediate Knowledge of Brahman attained in samādhi can remove the direct and immediate perception of multiplicity.

The following is from the *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*, quoted by Śankarāchārya in his commentary:

"After practising the postures as desired, according to the rules, O Gārgi, a man conquers the postures. Then he takes up prāṇāyāma.

"Sitting on a soft seat covered first with kuśa grass and then with a [deer or tiger] skin, worshipping Ganeśa with fruits and sweetmeats, placing the right palm on the left, holding the neck and the head in the same line, firmly closing the lips, facing the east or the north, fixing the eyes on the tip of the nose, avoiding too much of eating or fasting, the yogi should practise purification of the nāḍis (nerves), without which the practice of prāṇāyāma will be fruitless. He should meditate on the mystic syllable HUM at the junction of the right nostril (pingalā) and left nostril (idā) and inhale air through the left nostril for twelve seconds (mātrās); then he should meditate on fire in the same place, repeating the mystic word RUNG,

and while meditating thus, slowly exhale the air through the right nostril. Again, inhaling through the right nostril, the air should be slowly exhaled through the left nostril in the same way. This should be practised for three or four years, or three or four months, according to the direction of a guru, in secret [i.e. alone in a room], in the early morning, at midday, in the evening, and at midnight, until the nerves are purified. Lightness of body, clear complexion, good appetite, and hearing of the Nāda (Om) are the signs of such purification. Then should be practised prāṇāyāma, composed of exhalation (rechaka), retention (kumbhaka), and inhalation (puraka). Joining the prāṇa with the apāna is prāṇāyāma.

"The yogi should fill the body with breath, from head to foot, in sixteen seconds, exhale for thirty-two seconds, and not breathe again for sixty-four.

"There is another prāṇāyāma, in which the breath should first be retained for sixty-four seconds, then the prāṇa should be exhaled for sixteen seconds, and next inhaled for sixteen seconds.

"By prāṇāyāma the impurities of the body are expelled; by dhāraṇā, the impurities of the mind; and by samādhi, everything that hides the lordship of the soul." (*Adapted from Swami Vivekananda's translation in Raja-Yoga.*)

*Prāṇāyāma, or the control of the breath, which helps to steady the mind in the contemplation of Brahman, is described:*

## 9

The yogi of well regulated endeavours should control the prāṇas; when they are quieted he should breathe out through the nostrils. Then let him undistractedly restrain his mind, as a charioteer restrains his vicious horses.

WELL REGULATED ETC: Compare: "For him who is temperate in his food and recreation, temperate in his exertion at work, temperate in sleep and waking, yoga puts an end to all sorrows." (B. G. VI. 17.)

CONTROL THE PRĀṆAS: There are five manifestations of prāṇa, which function in different parts of the body. First of all, the yogi should control them by the process known as the purification of the nerves. Śankarāchārya describes this in his commentary as follows: "First close your right nostril with a finger and breathe in through the left nostril as much as possible. Then breathe out by the right nostril, closing the left nostril. Next breathe in again by the right nostril and breathe out by the left. This process should be repeated three or five times." Afterwards the yogi should practise prāṇāyāma, which consists in the inhalation, exhalation, and retention of the breath, under the guidance of a qualified teacher. (For further information on the subject see *Raja-Yoga*, by Swami Vivekananda.)

As a CHARIOTEER ETC: See *Ka. Up.* I. iii. 5. (*The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 148 ff.).

## 10

Let yoga be practised within a cave protected from the high wind, or in a place which is level, pure, and free from pebbles, gravel, and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water or of market-booths, and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye.

WATER: Public wells etc.

MARKET-BOOTHs: The booths in a market-place are notoriously noisy. See *B. G.* VI. 10-12.

*Certain auspicious signs indicating progress in yoga:*

## 11

When yoga is practised, the forms which appear first and which gradually manifest Brahman are those of snow-flakes, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fire-flies, lightning, crystal, and the moon.

While practising yoga the aspirant sees, one after another, the visions of a snow-fall, radiant smoke, and the brilliant sun. Then he feels within him a strong current of wind, followed by intense heat. Sometimes he sees in meditation the sky filled by fire-flies, or a dazzling flash of lightning; and sometimes the serene lustre of a crystal or of the moon. When the yogi beholds these visions he can be assured of his progress in yoga.

*A perfect body is obtained as a result of yoga.*

## 12

When earth, water, fire, air, and ākāśa arise, that is to say, when the five attributes of the elements, mentioned in the books on yoga, become manifest, then the yogi's body becomes purified by the fire of yoga and he is free from illness, old age, and death.

Each of the five subtle elements is endowed with its unique characteristic: earth with smell, water with taste, fire with form, air with touch, and ākāśa with sound. Through concentration the yogi can experience these attributes. Thus, by concentrating on the tip of the nose he enjoys a heavenly fragrance; by concentrating on the tip of the tongue, a heavenly flavour; by concentrating on the middle of the tongue, a heavenly touch; by

concentrating on the root of the tongue, a heavenly sound. (Yog. Su. I. 35., commentary of Swami Vivekananda.) By means of these perceptions the mind becomes steadied; for it is no longer attracted by outward objects.

*Further:*

## 13

The precursors of perfection in yoga, they say, are lightness and healthiness of the body, absence of desire, clear complexion, pleasantness of voice, sweet odour, and slight excretions.

## 14

As gold covered by earth shines bright after it has been purified, so also the yogi, realizing the truth of Ātman, becomes one [with the non-dual Ātman], attains the goal, and is free from grief.

PURIFIED: By fire.

*How does Self-Knowledge destroy grief?*

## 15

And when the yogi beholds the real nature of Brahman, through the Knowledge of the Self, radiant as a lamp, then, having known the unborn and immutable Lord, who is untouched by ignorance and its effects, he is freed from all fetters.

THROUGH ETC: Ātman and the Supreme Self, or Brahman, are non-different. The Supreme Self is to be known through the inner self.

## 16

He indeed, the Lord, who pervades all regions, was the first to be born, and it is He who dwells in the womb [of the universe]. It is He, again, who is born [as a child], and He will be born in the future. He stands behind all persons, and His face is everywhere.

LORD: The self-luminous Ātman.

ALL REGIONS: The four cardinal and the subsidiary directions.

THE FIRST ETC: That is to say, as Hiranyagarbha, or the Cosmic Mind.

WHO DWELLS ETC: As Virāt, or the personified totality of all bodies.

HIS FACE ETC: All faces are the faces of the Lord.

*The chapter is concluded:*

17

The self-luminous Lord, who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees—to that Lord let there be adoration! Yea, let there be adoration!

*Here ends the Second Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*



## CHAPTER III

THE NON-DUAL ENSNARER rules by His powers. Remaining one and the same, He rules by His powers all the worlds during their manifestation and continued existence. They who know this become immortal.

NON-DUAL: Refers to the Supreme Self, who is free from the slightest touch of duality, because duality is unreal.

ENSNARER: The word *jāla*, in the text, means snare or net and refers to *māyā*, or the creative energy of Brahman, by which the universe is projected, sustained, and ultimately withdrawn into Brahman. Brahman is often compared to a spider, and the universe, to its web. *Māyā* belongs to Brahman, as the silk from which the spider's web is made belongs to the spider. Though creating and preserving the universe, Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, remains untouched by this action. Brahman is often described as the Lord of *māyā*. *Māyā* becomes a sinister influence when it deludes living beings and makes them forget their identity with Brahman.

RULES BY HIS POWERS: *Māyā* is endowed with the powers of concealment and projection. Under its influence, first the true nature of Brahman is concealed, and next multiplicity is projected. (See *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 56-57.)

CONTINUED EXISTENCE: The word *sambhava*, in the text, also includes the state of dissolution. Creation is not possible without dissolution. The meaning is that Brahman, through Its power (*māyā*), controls the creation, preservation, and dissolution of the universe.

IMMORTAL: The realization that *Ātman*, or the Self, is non-different from Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, constitutes Immortality.

This verse states that the Lord, though non-dual, through His own power, called *māyā*, projects and preserves the universe and ultimately withdraws it into Himself.

*The Ensnarer is none other than Brahman, called Rudra in the following verse:*

## 2

Rudra is truly one; for the knowers of Brahman do not admit the existence of a second. He alone rules all the worlds by His powers. He dwells as the inner Self of every living being. After having created all the worlds, He, their Protector, takes them back into Himself at the end of time.

**RUDRA:** Refers to Brahman, the destroyer of ignorance and its effects, sorrow and suffering. In the Purāṇas the name Rudra signifies Śiva, who is the personification of Brahman in His destructive aspect. The Vedic seers described Brahman, or the Highest Reality, at different times by such different names as Rudra, Brahmā, Agni, Indra, etc.

According to the non-dualists, the creation is the manifestation of Brahman under the influence of His own māyā. They do not accept the view that God created the universe from an existing substance, like a potter making a pot from clay. Brahman is not merely the efficient cause; He is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe. The creation is māyā. It should be noted that the attributeless Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, is beyond time, space, and causality. The attributeless Brahman has generally been designated in the translation by the pronoun *It*. Brahman in association with māyā is described as the Lord, the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe and has been designated by the pronoun *He*. Since there is no real difference between the attributeless Brahman and the Creator, the pronouns *He* and *It* are sometimes interchanged in the text of the Upanishad and in the notes.

*Rudra is described in His universal form:*

## 3

His eyes are everywhere, His faces everywhere, His arms everywhere, everywhere His feet. He it is who endows men with arms, birds with feet and wings, and men likewise with feet. Having produced heaven and earth, He remains as their non-dual manifestor.

**HIS EYES ETC:** Wherever in the universe one sees eyes, ears, and other sense-organs, or faces, feet, and hands, they are all Brahman's; for Brahman is the soul and inmost essence of every being. Therefore whenever Brahman wants to hear or see, touch or feel, He does so spontaneously, using the organs of living beings. Names and forms, however, are created by māyā.

Therefore, though Brahman appears to be endowed with eyes, faces, etc., He is really unattached.

**NON-DUAL MANIFESTER:** The ignorant may see the universe and the diverse objects contained in it, and also may conceive of the Lord as the Creator; but from the standpoint of Reality, all that exists is Brahman, which is one and without a second. As the mirage is falsely superimposed on the desert, so the universe is falsely superimposed on Brahman. Names and forms, independent of Brahman, are unreal.

## 4

He, the omniscient Rudra, the creator of the gods and the bestower of their powers, the support of the universe, He who, in the beginning, gave birth to Hiranyagarbha—may He endow us with clear intellect!

**GODS:** The lesser cosmic powers, known as Agni (Fire), Vāyu (Wind), etc. They are manifestations of Brahman in the phenomenal universe.

**IN THE BEGINNING:** At the beginning of creation.

**HIRANYAGARBHA:** The word means, literally, the "Golden Germ" or the "Golden Womb." He is the first manifestation of Brahman in creation. He is the Cosmic Mind, the source of all other gods and living beings, and is the very stuff of knowledge.

**CLEAR INTELLECT:** The understanding by which one can realize Brahman.

*The devotee prays to the Lord for the revelation of His transcendental form:*

## 5

O Rudra, Thou who dwellest in the body and bestowest happiness! Look upon us with that most blessed form of Thine, which is auspicious, unterrifying, and all good.

**DWELLEST ETC:** Rudra, the Supreme Self, dwelling in the body, bestows happiness on the embodied creature. The word *Griśanta*, in the text, is translated by theistic interpreters of the Upanishad as "dweller in the mountains." The deity Śiva is described in the Purāṇas as dwelling in the Himālayas.

**LOOK UPON US:** That is to say, bring us the Highest Good with Thy kind glance.

**AUSPICIOUS:** Free from the slightest trace of impurity.

UNTERRIFYING: The pleasing aspect of the Lord.

ALL GOOD: That form of the Lord which reveals only what is good.

*A prayer to the Lord to withdraw His terrible form and shower upon the world His blessings:*

## 6

O Dweller in the body and Bestower of happiness, make benign that arrow which Thou holdest in Thy hand ready to shoot, O Protector of the body! Do not injure man or the world!

ARROW: Refers to the terrible aspect of the Godhead.

INJURE ETC: Or the passage may mean: "Do not hide from us Brahman with form, who manifests Himself as the phenomenal universe."

*Through the Knowledge of Brahman, the Ultimate Cause, one attains Immortality.*

## 7

The Supreme Lord is higher than Virāt, beyond Hiranyagarbha. He is vast and is hidden in the bodies of all living beings. By knowing Him who alone pervades the universe, men become immortal.

Virāt: Brahman, through māyā, identifies Himself with the totality of physical bodies and is called Virāt.

HIRANYAGARBHA: Another phenomenal aspect of Brahman, who identifies Himself, through māyā, with the totality of minds.

HIDDEN ETC: That is to say, as Pure Consciousness. As oil is hidden in oil-seed, and fire in fire-wood, so also is Brahman hidden in the physical body. Through self-control, discrimination, and meditation one realizes Brahman as one's inmost Self.

*The seeker, by realizing his identity with the non-dual Brahman, attains the Highest Good.*

## 8

I know the great Purusha, who is luminous, like the sun, and beyond darkness. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death; there is no other way to the Supreme Goal.

**PURUṢHA:** An epithet of Brahman, either because He dwells in the body (pura) or because He fills (purnatvāt) the whole universe.

**LUMINOUS, ETC:** As the sun destroys darkness, so the Knowledge of Brahman destroys ignorance.

**BEYOND ETC:** No trait of phenomenality can ever touch Brahman. The phenomenal universe is the creation of ignorance.

**BY KNOWING ETC:** The realization that one's inmost Self is the birthless and deathless Brahman constitutes Immortality. A man endowed with such realization knows the body, as well as birth and death, to be unreal.

**THERE IS ETC:** No attainment in the phenomenal universe, which is limited by time and space and governed by the law of causality, can be eternal.

*The Knowledge of Brahman bestows Immortality, for it transcends all.*

## 9

The whole universe is filled by the Puruṣha, to whom there is nothing superior, from whom there is nothing different, than whom there is nothing either smaller or greater; who stands alone, motionless as a tree, established in His own glory.

**THE WHOLE ETC:** Brahman pervades the universe as gold pervades a gold bracelet. He is the only substance in the universe, names and forms being created by māyā.

**THAN WHOM ETC:** The ideas of superiority, inferiority, difference, etc. are created by māyā and belong to the realm of phenomena.

*The knowledge that Brahman alone, through māyā, appears as both the world and the Creator bestows Immortality upon the seeker. Without it one experiences sorrow in the phenomenal world.*

## 10

That which is farthest from this world is without form and without affliction. They who know It become immortal; but others, indeed, suffer pain.

**THIS WORLD:** The Creator is the cause of the world. Brahman is beyond both the Creator and the world.

**OTHERS:** That is to say, the ignorant.

*Brahman is the inner Self of all.*

## 11

All faces are His faces; all heads, His heads; all necks, His necks. He dwells in the hearts of all beings. He is the all-pervading Bhagavān. Therefore He is the omnipresent and benign Lord.

BHAGAVĀN: An epithet of the Lord, who is endowed with six supernatural powers, namely, total power, dharma, glory, affluence, knowledge, and renunciation.

*Furthermore:*

## 12

He, indeed, is the great Purusha, the Lord [of creation, preservation, and destruction], who inspires the mind to attain the state of stainlessness. He is the Ruler and the Light that is imperishable.

STATE OF STAINLESSNESS: That is to say, the Knowledge of Ātman.

LIGHT: Pure Consciousness.

*The Self is revealed in the heart through discrimination and contemplation. The Knowledge of the Self bestows Immortality.*

## 13

The Purusha, no bigger than a thumb, is the inner Self, ever seated in the heart of man. He is known by the mind, which controls knowledge, and is perceived in the heart. They who know Him become immortal.

NO BIGGER ETC: The yogis meditate on Ātman as the luminous space in the heart, which resembles a lotus bud and is of the size of a thumb.

BY THE MIND ETC: The mind is the ruler or controller of knowledge. The yogi discriminates between the non-Self and the Self. The non-Self consists of the body, senses, mind, and ego; the Self is the perceiver of the non-Self. The passage in the text refers to the process of reflection by which one discriminates between the Self and the non-Self.

PERCEIVED ETC: Refers to the understanding, which, after the reflection mentioned in the preceding note, becomes free of all ideas of the non-Self and takes the form of Brahman, which is the true nature of man. This purified understanding (buddhi) reveals Brahman. Through reflection the

seeker first rids himself of all doubts regarding Brahman and becomes convinced of Its reality. Next his mind takes the form of Brahman. Afterwards, the very thought of Brahman destroys ignorance and its effect, the mind. Lastly, after the mind's destruction, the thought of Brahman, which is a state of the mind, merges in Brahman, just as a face reflected in a mirror reverts to the real face of the beholder when the mirror is destroyed. Then Brahman alone exists.

See *Ka. Up.* II. iii. 9.

*The Spirit that dwells in man is the inmost Self of all.*

## 14

The Purusha with a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, compasses the earth on all sides and extends beyond it by ten fingers' breadth.

THOUSAND: That is to say, innumerable.

ON ALL SIDES: Both within and without.

EXTENDS ETC: Śankara explains "ten fingers' breadth" to mean infinity. Brahman permeates the universe and extends into the boundless beyond. Or, he says, the passage may refer to the heart, which is ten fingers above the navel.

Through *māyā* the illusory universe is superimposed upon Brahman, as a mirage is superimposed upon the desert. Brahman is the substratum of the universe and also transcends it. When the illusory superimposition is negated by means of the Vedāntic discrimination, the transcendental nature of Brahman is revealed. (This famous verse is the same as *Ri. X. xc. 1*. See also *Chh. Up.* III. xii. 6.)

*It may be contended that if Brahman is the Self of all beings, then It is Itself a phenomenal being. In that case, in the absence of the universe, Brahman ceases to exist. In answer it is said that Brahman is the controller of the universe, and exists even when the universe of names and forms disappears in the deepest spiritual experience.*

## 15

The Purusha alone is all this—what has been and what will be. He is also the Lord of Immortality and of whatever grows by food.



ALL THIS: The universe that is perceived to exist at the present moment.

LORD OF ETC: He is the giver of Liberation. For the liberated soul the universe of names and forms does not exist.

OF WHATEVER ETC: That is to say, of all living beings.

*Brahman reveals Itself in two aspects: cosmic and acosmic. The cosmic aspect, projected by māyā, is now described:*

## 16

His hands and feet are everywhere; His eyes, heads, and faces are everywhere; His ears are everywhere; He exists compassing all.

HE EXISTS ETC: Brahman pervades all beings as Existence and Consciousness.

The same verse is found in B. G. XIII. 13.

*The body, the organs of perception and action, etc. are superimposed upon Brahman through māyā. He is really devoid of them.*

## 17

Himself devoid of senses, He shines through the functions of the senses. He is the capable ruler of all; He is the refuge of all. He is great.

HE SHINES ETC: The word *senses*, which indicates the organs of both perception and action, includes also the inner organ of the mind. All these are upādhis, or limitations, of Brahman. Brahman manifests Himself through the upādhis of the inner and the outer organs, that is to say, through their functions, namely, determining, willing, thinking, hearing, speaking, and the like. Brahman functions, as it were, through the functions of all the senses. This functioning of Brahman is merely apparent; it is not real. Brahman is incorporeal.

GREAT: The ultimate cause.

## 18

The Swan, the ruler of the whole world, of all that is moving and all that is motionless, becomes the embodied self, and dwelling in the city of nine gates, flies outward.

SWAN: The Sanskrit word *hamsa*, in the text, means the Supreme Self.

BECOMES: This becoming is only apparent; it is not real.

**CITY ETC:** That is to say, the physical body with its nine apertures: the two ears, and two eyes, the two nostrils, the mouth, and the organs of generation and evacuation.

**FLIES OUTWARD:** That is to say, becomes active for the experiencing of external objects.

*After describing the cosmic aspect of Brahman, the Upanishad shows Its acosmic aspect:*

## 19

Grasping without hands, hasting without feet, It sees without eyes, It hears without ears. It knows what is to be known, but no one knows It. They call It the First, the Great, the Full.

**THEY:** The knowers of Brahman.

**FIRST:** The ultimate cause of the universe.

*Furthermore:*

## 20

The Self, smaller than the small, greater than the great, is hidden in the hearts of creatures. The wise, by the grace of the Creator, behold the Lord, majestic and desireless, and become free from grief.

**SMALLER ETC:** Ātman is smaller than a barley grain and greater than the wide universe. It is the inmost essence of all things that exist, great or small. It gives all tangible things the appearance of reality. Without It nothing would exist. In Its real nature, Ātman is free of all upādhis, or limitations.

**CREATURES:** From Brahmā, the highest cosmic existence, to the blade of grass.

**GRACE OF THE CREATOR:** By the grace of the Lord one becomes conscious of the reality of Ātman. Or the passage may mean "through the tranquillity of the senses and the mind." One feels inner tranquillity when the sense-organs are withdrawn from outer objects and the mind is desireless. Through this serene mind one gains the vision of the Self. A man cannot become desireless and serene without the grace of God, nor can he feel the grace of God without inner serenity. Grace and individual effort do not conflict.

**BEHOLD:** That is to say, realize directly their oneness with the Supreme Self.

MAJESTIC: The unique majesty of Ātman consists in the fact that It does not expand or contract by association with upādhis, great or small. It does not become holy through a man's good action, or sinful through his evil action, because Its association with upādhis is illusory and not real. But evil action creates a barrier and hinders a man from beholding Ātman, whereas good action removes the barrier.

*The Self-realization of an illumined seer is described:*

21

I know this undecaying, primeval One, the Self of all things, which exists everywhere, being all-pervading, and which the wise declare to be free from birth. The teachers of Brahman, indeed, speak of It as eternal.

UNDECAYING: Free from change.

FREE FROM BIRTH: That is to say, free from any causal relationship.

*Here ends the Third Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER IV

HE, THE ONE AND UNDIFFERENTIATED, who by the manifold application of His powers produces, in the beginning, different objects for a hidden purpose, and, in the end, withdraws the universe into Himself, is indeed the self-luminous [Supreme Self]. May He endow us with clear intellect!

UNDIFFERENTIATED: Brahman is non-dual and homogeneous Consciousness. It is free from any diversity, actual or potential. Or the word *avarna*, in the text, may mean "without colour or caste." In ancient India caste was primarily determined by the colour or complexion of the individual.

BY THE MANIFOLD ETC: A reference to *māyā*, the creative power of Brahman.

PRODUCES: The production or creation is not real. The diversity of names and forms is superimposed upon Brahman through *māyā*.

DIFFERENT OBJECTS: Various entities of the phenomenal universe, endowed with specific characteristics. Or the words *varnān anekān*, in the text, may refer to the various castes of Hindu society, based upon the psychological and physical differences observed among human beings.

FOR ETC: The purpose of the creation, whether it is considered as illusory or as real, will ever remain unknown to the finite mind. The mind cannot possibly understand what happens in the infinite consciousness of Brahman. From the standpoint of the non-dual Brahman, the phenomenal universe is non-existent. Further, those who see multiplicity, from the relative standpoint, cannot comprehend the non-dual Brahman. It is absurd for the finite mind to try to discover the relationship between the Absolute and the relative, the One and the many. Such a relationship does not exist. To assume the existence of such a relationship and to seek to explain it is *māyā*. Or the phrase *nihitārtho*, in the text, may mean "without any personal purpose." The creation is spontaneous, voluntary, and free from any compulsion from outside. It is the very nature of Brahman to project the phenomenal universe with the help of *māyā*, the inscrutable power that rests in Brahman and cannot exist independent of Brahman.

WITHDRAWS: By the mention of creation and dissolution it is implied that the universe is sustained by Brahman during the period of its continuance.

SELF-LUMINOUS: Refers to Brahman, who is Pure Consciousness.

MAY HE ETC: This passage and the other scriptural passages like it show that the ancient Hindus prized understanding and knowledge above everything else.

Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, alone exists. It is the only Reality. The reality of the sense-perceived phenomenal universe is admitted from the standpoint of māyā. It is explained as the spontaneous manifestation of Brahman, which projects diverse objects with the help of māyā, Its inherent power. To the ignorant man the universe is real; to the rational mind it is a puzzle. The wise do not see anything independent of Brahman.

*It is Brahman that appears as the phenomenal universe at the time of creation. The universe merges in Brahman at the time of dissolution. Nothing exists independent of It. Therefore,*

## 2

That [Supreme Self] is Agni (Fire); It is Āditya (Sun); It is Vāyu (Wind); It is Chandramā (Moon). That Self is the luminous stars; It is Hiranyagarbha; It is water; It is Virāt.

HIRANYAGARBHA: Brahman conditioned by the upādhi of all minds. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 68-69.)

VIRĀT: Brahman conditioned by the upādhi of all bodies. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 68, 70-71.)

Such Vedic deities as Agni, Āditya, Vāyu, etc. are only manifestations of Brahman in the phenomenal universe. "Reality is one: sages call It by various names." (Ri. I. clxiv. 46.) The Vedic philosophy no doubt contains pantheistic ideas for the understanding of mediocre minds, but it ultimately teaches the sole reality of Brahman.

*Brahman alone is the essence of all phenomenal entities.*

## 3

Thou art woman, Thou art man; Thou art youth and maiden too. Thou as an old man totterest along on a staff; it is Thou alone who, when born, assumest diverse forms.

WHEN BORN: Birth or creation is māyā.

Furthermore:

4

Thou art the dark-blue bee; Thou art the green parrot with red eyes; Thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, and the seas. Thou art beginningless and all-pervading. From Thee all the worlds are born.

BEGINNINGLESS: Because Brahman is the immutable essence of all entities. Names and forms alone change, and not the essence.

*The following verse describes prakṛiti, or nature, characterized by the three guṇas, and also the way it entangles living beings in the world, and their final Liberation:*

5

There is one unborn [prakṛiti]—red, white, and black—which gives birth to many creatures like itself. An unborn [individual soul] becomes attached to it and enjoys it, while another unborn [individual soul] leaves it after his enjoyment is completed.

UNBORN: From the relative standpoint, prakṛiti, or nature, is without beginning.

RED, ETC: The passage denotes the three guṇas—rajas, sattva, and tamas—which constitute prakṛiti. The text refers to *Chh. Up.* VI. iv. 1 ff. It is stated there that all the objects of nature—fire, sun, moon, lightning, etc.—are composed of three elements or colours (guṇas), white being the characteristic of sattva, red of rajas, and black of tamas. Thus every material object consists of these three elements, having no existence outside them. There is no such thing, for example, as fire independent of the three guṇas. According to Vedānta, forms and names are mere verbal expressions. A substance is inseparable from name and form. Therefore the conclusion is that prakṛiti, consisting of the three guṇas, is the only beginningless entity in the relative universe, all objects endowed with names and forms being superimposed upon it through māyā.

GIVES BIRTH: That the tangible objects of the universe are products of the beginningless prakṛiti was perceived by the seers through yoga and concentration. (See I. 3.)

CREATURES: Refers to physical objects, which are the effects of prakṛiti.

LIKE ITSELF: All physical objects, like prakṛiti, their cause, consist of the three guṇas.

AN UNBORN ETC: The individual soul is beginningless. As determined

by its past desires and actions, it becomes attached to different material objects. Thus, forgetting its true nature, it regards itself as a material object and enjoys other similar objects.

ANOTHER UNBORN ETC: Refers to the individual soul whose ignorance has been destroyed and who consequently renounces material objects.

AFTER HIS ETC: A phenomenal jiva cultivates dispassion for the world only after realizing the transitory nature of its objects through the experience of many births.

*This verse of the Upanishad has been translated differently by the followers of the Sāṃkhya philosophy. According to them, the word unborn (ajā), meaning, literally, female, stands for she-goat, and the word unborn (aja) in the second sentence, for he-goat. The words red, white, and black refer to the three stripes of the she-goat. According to their interpretation, the verse can be translated as follows:*

There is one unborn [female]—red, white, and black—who gives birth to many creatures like herself. An unborn [male] becomes attached to her and enjoys her, while another unborn [male] leaves her after his enjoyment is completed.

This verse of the Upanishads is very much prized by the Sāṃkhya philosophers. According to them there are two ultimate principles: puruṣa and prakṛiti. Prakṛiti, or nature, is one and inert. The proximity of the puruṣa, which is pure consciousness, activates prakṛiti. Prakṛiti consists of the three guṇas. There are, on the other hand, innumerable puruṣas, or conscious entities. A puruṣa comes under the spell of prakṛiti, forgets his real nature, and becomes attached to the world of matter. After repeated experiences of material pleasures, he at last becomes satiated with them and relinquishes the world. But prakṛiti casts her spell over another puruṣa; thus the cosmic process continues without coming to an end. It should be stated that prakṛiti acts both as deluder and as liberator. One can know the ephemeral nature of worldly pleasures only through experience, and nature provides this experience, thus paving the way to one's ultimate freedom. Some Sāṃkhya philosophers compare prakṛiti to a dancing-girl who traps a man by her physical charm. When satiated with enjoyment, he gives her up and she goes on to another man. In the text, prakṛiti is compared to a she-goat with three stripes, and the puruṣa to a he-goat. No sooner does one he-goat give her up than another runs after her.

Though the Sāṃkhya philosophers explain this verse to suit their purpose, it should be noted, as has been pointed out in the translator's introduction to the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, that the purpose of the Upanishad is to



establish the sole reality of the non-dual Brahman and not that of puruṣa and prakṛti as taught by the Sāṃkhya philosophers.

*The embodied self and the Pure Self are described with a view to helping the aspirant attain the Knowledge of Ultimate Reality:*

## 6

Two birds, united always and known by the same name, closely cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating.

TWO BIRDS: The individual self and the Supreme Self. The former is Pure Consciousness conditioned by the body and mind on account of its association with ignorance (avidyā). The latter is Pure Consciousness unconditioned by any limiting factors—the Lord Himself, who is eternally pure, free, and illumined and is the master or controller of avidyā.

UNITED ALWAYS: The individual self is the reflection of the Supreme Self in the buddhi. The two are inseparable companions, like an object and its reflection.

SAME NAME: That is to say, Ātman.

TREE: The body.

ONE OF THEM: The individual self, or jīva.

EATS: That is to say, experiences. On account of lack of discrimination, the jīva identifies itself with the body and experiences the pleasant or unpleasant fruits of action.

THE OTHER: The Lord, who is the Witness, or Pure Consciousness. He is the controller of both the individual self and the body and is the detached Witness of their activities.

This verse is the same as *Mu. Up. III. i. 1.*

*The suffering of the jīva is the result of its feeling of impotence. This impotence is destroyed by its knowledge of unity with the Lord.*

## 7

Seated on the same tree, the jīva moans, bewildered by its impotence. But when it beholds the other, the Lord worshipped by all, and His glory, it becomes free from grief.

SEATED ETC: The grief of the jīva is the result of its identification with the body. "Under the heavy weight of ignorance, desire, action, and long-

ing for the fruit of action, the jiva becomes drowned, as it were, in the ocean of the world. It is convinced beyond doubt that the body is Ātman and regards itself as the son or grandson of this or that man. It thinks, further, that it is lean or stout, endowed with or devoid of good qualities, and a victim of pleasure and pain, and that there exists nothing else but the tangible universe. Thus it comes under the sway of birth and death in samsāra and believes itself to be united with or parted from friends and kinsmen." (Śankarāchārya.)

**BEWILDERED:** The perplexity of the jiva is due to the numerous troubles inevitable in the worldly life, all the result of ignorance.

**IMPOTENCE:** "In a state of helplessness the jiva cries: 'I am completely powerless. I am good for nothing. I have lost my son; my wife is dead. What avails my life any more?'" (Śankarāchārya.) The cause of man's suffering and impotence is māyā, under whose influence he first forgets his divine nature and then associates himself with many illusory notions.

**BEHOLDS ETC.:** "The jiva, through attachment to the world, performs good and evil actions and thus assumes the body of a god, man, beast, bird, or inferior creature. Afterwards, as the result of virtuous actions, such as the practice of austerities and worship, performed by it in many previous births as well as in this life, it develops a longing for freedom and approaches a compassionate spiritual teacher and is shown the path of yoga. And at long last, through the practice of spiritual disciplines, such as non-violence, truthfulness, continence, renunciation, sense-control, and inner calmness, it is able to fix its mind on the Lord, contemplate Him, and obtain His vision." (Śankarāchārya.)

**THE LORD:** Though dwelling in the body, the Lord is not conditioned by it. He is unaffected by samsāra: hunger and thirst, grief and suffering, old age and death.

**BY ALL:** Yogis, jñānis, and all other righteous people.

Through the practice of spiritual discipline the embodied soul overcomes ignorance and realizes its oneness with the Lord dwelling in all bodies. Thus it gives up its false impotence and realizes its divine majesty.

This verse is the same as *Mu. Up. III. i. 2.*

*The knower of the Self realizes the Highest Good.*

Of what use are the Vedas to him who does not know that indestructible Substance, that ākāśa-like Brahman, which is greater than the unmanifest and wherein the Vedas and all the gods are sheltered? Only those who know It attain bliss.

**ĀKĀŚA-LIKE BRAHMAN:** Brahman is all-pervading, like ākāśa.

**UNMANIFEST:** Ākāśa is the first modification of Brahman under the influence of māyā. In this state the names and forms of the phenomenal universe remain undifferentiated.

**WHEREIN ETC:** Brahman is the support and source of both the scriptures and the deities.

*Brahman is immutable Pure Being, free from causal relationships. Due to māyā It is called the Creator The phenomenal universe has an illusory existence only; it is unreal from the standpoint of Brahman. Māyā is the creative power of Brahman, by means of which the universe is projected and sustained.*

## 9

The sacred verses, the offerings (yajna), the sacrifices (kratu), the penances (vrata), the past, the future, and all that the Vedas declare, have been produced from the imperishable Brahman. Brahman projects the universe through the power of Its māyā. Again, in that universe Brahman [as the jiva] is entangled through māyā.

**SACRED VERSES:** Refers to the four Vedas and their auxiliaries.

**OFFERINGS ETC:** The difference between the yajna and the kratu is that in the former soma juice is used.

**PAST ETC:** The present also is included.

**ALL THAT ETC:** The Vedas alone prove the validity of sacrifices, penances, etc.

**BRAHMAN PROJECTS ETC:** As the desert remains unchanged in spite of the illusory appearance of a mirage, so Brahman remains unchanged in spite of the illusory appearance of the universe. It is the very nature of illusion to give an appearance of reality to both the mirage and the phenomenal universe. (For an explanation of māyā, see *Self-Knowledge*, p. 49 ff., and *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 50 ff.)

**AGAIN, ETC:** The living beings who are entangled in the universe are none other than Brahman. Through the power of māyā, Brahman appears as the jiva, attached to the world. (For the nature of the jiva, see *Self-Knowledge*, p. 70 ff., and *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 87-88.)

As the silk-worm becomes imprisoned in its own cocoon, so Brahman, as the jiva, becomes imprisoned in the universe. As the spider moves freely on the web created from its own silk, so Brahman Itself remains unentangled in creation. Brahman associated with māyā is called the jiva.

Without any compulsion from outside, Brahman, in association with māyā, projects the universe and becomes the embodied beings.

*It has already been stated (I. 3; I. 9-10.) that prakṛiti, or nature, which is the material cause of the universe, is māyā, and that Brahman, which is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, is the unrelated support of the universe. Brahman, when conditioned by the universe, is called the Lord of māyā. The entire phenomenal universe, sustained by the law of cause and effect, consists of material objects which are nothing but Pure Consciousness.*

## 10

Know, then, that prakṛiti is māyā and that the Great God is the Lord of māyā. The whole universe is filled with objects which are parts of His being.

KNOW . . . PRAKRITI ETC: The Bhagavad Gītā states (VII. 4-5.) that when desirous of creation, Brahman projects material forms from His lower nature, which is māyā. Then His higher nature animates them by entering into them as life and consciousness. (IX. 10.) Thus the universe is created and sustained by the higher and the lower natures of Brahman. Needless to say, this explanation of creation is given from the phenomenal standpoint.

GREAT GOD: That is to say, Brahman.

IS THE LORD ETC: Because the very existence and manifestation of māyā are dependent upon Brahman.

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE ETC: The material entities constituting the universe are in reality Brahman. On account of māyā, Brahman Itself appears as the universe and its diverse objects. As the snake falsely imagined in a rope is nothing but the rope, so that which the ignorant regard as material objects, existing in time and space and related by the causal law, is perceived by illumined souls to be nothing but Brahman, or Pure Consciousness. As the rope alone pervades the illusory snake, so Brahman pervades the universe. On account of māyā the ignorant see in the universe good and evil, pain and pleasure, life and death, and the other pairs of opposites. To the knower of Truth all this is Brahman, ever pure, ever conscious, and ever free. At a great distance from the sun one sees night and day, light and darkness—phenomena that would not exist if one could view things from the sun itself. To the knower of Brahman, māyā itself is Brahman.

**PARTS OF HIS BEING:** In reality Brahman is without parts. Parts, lower and higher, are superimposed upon It through māyā.

*The immutable Brahman is the ultimate cause of māyā and its effects, such as ākāśa, air, fire, and the other elements. The substratum of all that is perceived to exist, It pervades every object as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, Sachchidānanda. Therefore the seeker should realize his oneness with all and thus attain peace.*

## 11

By truly realizing Him who, though non-dual, dwells in prakṛti, both in its primary and in its secondary aspect, and in whom this whole world comes together and dissolves—by truly realizing Him who is the Lord, the bestower of blessings, the Adorable God, one attains the supreme peace.

**TRULY REALIZING:** Directly realizing one's identity with Brahman.

**DWELLS ETC:** Brahman dwells in all things as their inmost essence. As the desert is the unattached substratum of the mirage, so Brahman is the substratum of the phenomenal universe.

**PRIMARY ETC:** The primary aspect of prakṛti is called mulāvidyā, which, at the beginning of the creation, veils Brahman and obscures Its true nature. Its secondary aspect consists of the various elements—ākāśa, air, fire, water, and earth—which form, as it were, the bricks of the universe.

**COMES TOGETHER:** At the time of the creation of the universe.

**DISSOLVES:** At the time of the cosmic dissolution.

**BLESSINGS:** That is to say, Liberation.

**ADORABLE GOD:** The radiant Deity (Deva) extolled by the Vedic seers.

**SUPREME PEACE:** The peace that arises from the Knowledge of Non-duality. When it has been attained all longings based upon the perception of duality are quenched. One has a glimpse of such peace in deep sleep, when the duality of subject and object are not seen; also in the depths of aesthetic contemplation, when the ego and non-ego are transcended. The realization of Non-duality is Liberation; it bestows uninterrupted Bliss. Liberation puts an end to ignorance and repeated births in the phenomenal world.

*A prayer for the uninterrupted Knowledge of Reality:*

## 12

He, the creator of the gods and the bestower of their powers, the Support of the universe, Rudra the omniscient, who at the beginning gave birth to Hiranyagarbha—may He endow us with clear intellect!

For the interpretation of this verse see *Śvet. Up.* III. 4.

## 13

He who is the sovereign of the gods, in whom the worlds find their support, who rules over all two-footed and four-footed beings—let us serve that God, radiant and blissful, with an oblation.

WORLDS: The fourteen planes which constitute the Vedāntic universe. (See *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 75-76.)

*The Supreme Brahman is extremely subtle, the Witness of the cosmic process, the ultimate cause of the phenomenal universe, the inmost Self of all, and the bestower of Liberation upon those who realize their oneness with Him.*

## 14

By realizing Him who is subtler than the subtlest, who dwells in the midst of the chaos [of the world], who is the Creator of all things and is endowed with many forms, who is the non-dual Pervader of the universe, and all good—by realizing Him one attains the supreme peace.

SUTTLER ETC: The elements are subtler than the gross universe. The undifferentiated prakṛiti (avyākṛita) is the subtlest entity in the phenomenal world. But Brahman is subtler than the undifferentiated prakṛiti.

DWELLS: As the unattached onlooker.

CHAOS ETC: The universe is the product of avidyā; hence it presents a state of indescribable confusion.

*By the Knowledge of Brahman one attains Immortality.*

## 15

It is He who, in proper time, becomes the custodian of the universe and the sovereign of all; who conceals Himself in all beings [as their

inner Witness]; and in whom the sages and the deities are united. Verily, by knowing Him one cuts asunder the fetters of death.

**IN PROPER ETC:** That is to say, at the beginning of a cycle. After the dissolution of the universe at the end of a cycle, the diverse beings, with the subtle impressions of their accumulated actions, remain merged in prakṛiti. When those actions are about to bear fruit the next cycle begins. Thus the tangible universe, animated by the spirit of the Lord, comes into existence.

**IN ALL BEINGS:** From Brahmā, the highest cosmic manifestation, to the blade of grass.

**THE SAGES ETC:** Because Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute is the substratum of all.

**FETTERS ETC:** Ignorance (avidyā) is death. A person under the spell of ignorance forgets his true, spiritual nature, considers himself an individual, and thus falls a victim to repeated births and deaths. Desires and actions, the offspring of ignorance, are called the fetters of death.

*The Supreme Brahman is extremely subtle, exceedingly blissful, and free from blemish. He resides in all beings as their inner spirit, and endows them with their apparent reality.*

## 16

He who knows Brahman, who is all Bliss, extremely subtle, like the film that rises to the surface of clarified butter, and is hidden in all beings—he who knows the radiant Deity, the sole Pervader of the universe, is released from all his fetters.

**LIKE THE FILM ETC:** When butter, which is the subtle part of milk, is boiled, a thin film forms on the surface which is extremely fine and tasty. Likewise, Brahman is the subtlest of all entities and the bestower of Supreme Bliss.

*Brahman consists of uninterrupted Bliss. He is the Creator and the Pervader of the universe. He is of the very nature of Liberation, which is attained by all-renouncing sannyāsins.*

## 17

The Maker of all things, self-luminous and all-pervading, He dwells always in the hearts of men. He is revealed by the negative teachings



[of the Vedānta], discriminative wisdom, and the Knowledge of Unity based upon reflection. They who know Him become immortal.

**MAKER OF ALL ETC:** The manifester of such phenomenal entities as the Cosmic Mind, the tangible universe, and the senses.

**DWELLS ETC:** Brahman is reflected best in the ākāśa, or space, enclosed in the heart, as the sun is reflected best in water.

**REVEALED:** As the indivisible, homogeneous Reality.

**IS REVEALED ETC:** Compare Śvet. Up. III. 13; Ka. Up. II. iii. 9.

**NEGATIVE ETC:** Refers to the well-known Vedāntic method of Neti—"Not this."

**VEDĀNTA:** The word refers here to the Upanishads, which form the essence and concluding part (anta) of the Vedas.

**DISCRIMINATIVE ETC:** By which the aspirant knows what is the Highest Good and what is not, what is the Self and what is the non-Self, and so on.

**KNOWLEDGE OF ETC:** The pupil first hears about this Unity from a qualified teacher, then reasons about it, and at last realizes it in the depths of meditation.

**THEY ETC:** Refers to the sannyāsins who have practised the fourfold disciplines laid down by Vedāntic teachers. These are discrimination between the Real and the unreal, renunciation of the unreal, a group of six virtues (calmness of mind, control of the senses, etc.), and lastly the yearning for freedom. (See *Self-Knowledge*, p. 33 ff.)

**IMMORTAL:** The cycle of birth and death in the phenomenal world is the result of avidyā.

*Brahman is untouched by time and free from the pairs of opposites. It transcends the notion of creation, preservation, and destruction and remains unaffected by the experiences of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Time, space, and causality, the three states of waking, etc., and creation, preservation, and destruction are falsely superimposed upon Brahman through māyā.*

## 18

When there is no darkness [of ignorance], there is no day or night, neither being nor non-being; the pure Brahman alone exists. That immutable Reality is the meaning of "That"; It is adored by the Sun. From It has proceeded the ancient wisdom.

**DARKNESS:** Avidyā, or ignorance, which creates such illusory pairs of opposites as day and night, being and non-being. When the darkness of

avidyā is removed, all changes and distinctions are transcended; undifferentiated Bliss alone remains. When one is away from the sun, one sees the distinction of day and night; but in the sun itself no such phenomena exist. The Knowledge arising from the experience of identity with Brahman removes the darkness created by avidyā.

**THERE IS ETC:** Such notions as day and night, being and non-being, are falsely superimposed upon Brahman because of ignorance.

**PURE BRAHMAN ETC:** The word Śiva, in the text, denotes the Blessed One, and the word *kevala* signifies the pure Brahman, which is free from all illusions created by avidyā.

**"THAT":** Refers to the well-known Vedic statement "That thou art"—*Tattvamasi*. (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7.*)

**SUN:** Refers to Saguna Brahman, who, though pervading the entire universe, is especially associated with the radiant sun. The passage in the text forms part of the famous Gāyatri mantra. (*Ri. III. lxii. 10.*)

**ANCIENT WISDOM:** The knowledge of the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, as expressed by the Vedic statement "That thou art," has come down from Brahmā, the Creator, through a succession of teachers. To Brahmā it was revealed by Brahman Itself. This Knowledge is devoid of human origin and therefore free from human blemishes.

The Knowledge of Brahman is eternal, like Brahman Itself. At the beginning of a cycle it is revealed to Brahmā, from whom it spreads through a succession of teachers. Men of detachment and discrimination keep this Knowledge alive.

*The immutable Brahman is totally incomprehensible to the finite mind. Being one and without a second, He has no peer. Brahman's glory consists in His being unaffected by time and space.*

## 19

No one can grasp Him above, across, or in the middle. There is no likeness of Him. His name is Great Glory (*Mahad Yaśah*).

**NO ONE ETC:** Because Brahman is undifferentiated Consciousness, free from parts and incorporeal. Such terms as "above," "across," etc. can be applied only to a material object.

**THERE IS ETC:** Because Brahman is the eternal experience of indivisible Bliss.

**GREAT GLORY:** Brahman fills all the quarters and pervades everything. That constitutes His superhuman glory.

*Brahman cannot be apprehended by the sense-organs; He is the inmost Self of all. Knowledge of one's identity with Brahman constitutes Liberation.*

## 20

His form is not an object of vision; no one beholds Him with the eyes. They who, through pure intellect and the Knowledge of Unity based upon reflection, realize Him as abiding in the heart become immortal.

**HIS FORM:** Brahman is Pure Consciousness and is self-luminous. He is devoid of any form such as is associated with a tangible material object. The senses can perceive objects which exist outside; but Brahman is the inmost Self of man.

**NO ONE ETC:** The eyes, the nose, and the other sense-organs are mere instruments for the perception of objects. The real perceiver is Ātman, or Consciousness. It is the eternal Subject and therefore cannot be an object of perception. Compare: "That which cannot be perceived by the eye, but by which the eye is perceived—That alone know as Brahman, and not that which people here worship." (Ke. Up. I. 7.)

**THROUGH PURE ETC:** See Śvet. Up. IV. 17.

**ABIDING ETC:** As the inmost Self of all.

It is only the sannyāsins, the great renouncers who have practised the requisite spiritual disciplines, that know by direct and immediate experience the oneness of the self and Brahman. Thus they transcend death. Death belongs to the phenomenal life, which is the product of avidyā. The Knowledge of Brahman destroys avidyā, and consequently the knower of Brahman is free from repeated births and deaths.

*Through the grace of Brahman one attains the fulfilment of desires and is freed from all obstacles. In the following two verses the seeker supplicates Brahman for His grace:*

## 21

It is because Thou, O Lord, art birthless, that some rare souls, frightened [by birth and death], take refuge in Thee. O Rudra, may Thy benign face protect me for ever!

**BIRTHLESS:** Brahman, unlike an embodied being, is free from such phenomenal characteristics as birth, infirmity, disease, death, hunger, and thirst.

**RARE SOULS:** Those who come to the Lord for shelter, afflicted by disease or fear, or for any other reason, are rare indeed.

**BENIGN:** The word is explained by one of the commentators as meaning either "invigorating" or "exhilarating" or "turned toward the south."

## 22

O Rudra, do not, in Thy wrath, destroy our children and grandchildren. Do not destroy our lives; do not destroy our cows or horses; do not destroy our strong servants. For we invoke Thee always, with oblations, for our protection.

*Here ends the Fourth Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER V

IN THE IMMUTABLE, infinite Supreme Brahman remain hidden the two: knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance leads to worldliness, and knowledge, to Immortality. Brahman, who controls both knowledge and ignorance, is different from both.

INFINITE: That is to say, unlimited by time, space, or other factors.

IN . . . SUPREME BRAHMAN: Or the phrase may mean "In Brahman, who is superior to Hiranyagarbha (the Cosmic Mind)."

IS DIFFERENT ETC: That is to say, Brahman is the unattached Witness of both knowledge and ignorance.

Ignorance and knowledge, both belonging to māyā, are two categories of the phenomenal universe, of which Brahman is the ultimate cause. The māyā of ignorance entangles man in the world, and the māyā of knowledge brings him Liberation. Knowledge here denotes the spiritual virtues by means of which an aspirant ultimately attains Liberation. Ramakrishna compared ignorance and knowledge to two thorns: the thorn of ignorance, which has entered the flesh, is taken out with the help of the thorn of knowledge, and then both are discarded. Brahman is the detached Witness of the world process, which is sustained by the power of knowledge and ignorance.

*Brahman is described:*

### 2

He, the non-dual Brahman, who rules over every position [by dwelling in each as its inner Guide]; who controls all forms and all sources; who, in the beginning, filled with knowledge the omniscient Hiranyagarbha, His own creation, whom He beheld when He (Hiranyagarbha) was produced—He is other than both knowledge and ignorance.

POSITION: Refers to all physical, elemental, and intangible objects, such as earth, water, air, heaven, sun, sense-organs, and mind. He inhabits all

these objects and is within them; but Him they do not know. They form His body; He controls them as their internal Ruler and immortal Self. (See *Br. Up.* III. vii. 3-13.)

**WHO . . . SOURCES:** A reference to the two aspects of avidyā: undifferentiated and differentiated. (See *Śvet. Up.* IV. 11.)

**FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE:** That is to say, with knowledge of the past, present, and future. Dharma, or righteousness, detachment, and the various other virtues are also included.

**HIRANYAGARBHA:** The first manifestation of Brahman in the relative universe. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 68-69.)

*The creation by the Lord is described:*

### 3

[At the time of the creation] the Lord spreads out individual nets in various ways, and then [at the time of the cosmic dissolution] withdraws them into the great prakṛiti. Again the all-pervading Deity creates the aggregates of body and senses, both individual and collective, and their controllers also, and thus exercises His overlordship.

**INDIVIDUAL NETS:** The non-Self, or physical element, consisting of body, mind, senses, and prāṇa is called a net because it entraps the soul and entangles it in the world.

**VARIOUS WAYS:** Refers to diverse aggregates of body, senses, mind, etc. Their nature in the present cycle is determined by the actions and thoughts of individuals in the previous cycle.

**WITHDRAWS:** In the reverse order from that of creation.

**GREAT PRAKRITI:** The collective or universal māyā, which is the source of multiplicity.

**CONTROLLERS:** The various centres of consciousness, from Hiranyagarbha to the mosquito. Hiranyagarbha is the controller of the totality of minds. Units of consciousness control the bodies of gods, men, and subhuman creatures.

The meaning of this rather abstruse verse appears to be as follows: At the beginning of a cycle the Lord (that is to say, Saguna Brahman) projects from His māyā, or prakṛiti, various aggregates of body, mind, senses, and prāṇa. These aggregates, which are the bodies of superhuman, human, and subhuman creatures, are fashioned according to their actions and thoughts in the previous cycle. The bodies are called nets because they entrap the puruṣas, or souls, and entangle them in the world. The puruṣas are diversified aspects of Brahman, limited, under the influence of māyā, by the different bodies. At the time of the cosmic dissolution the bodies

merge in the great prakṛiti. They are projected again at the beginning of the next cycle. The first form thus projected is the undifferentiated aggregate, which is controlled by Hiranyagarbha. Then other individual forms come into existence; and they are controlled by various conscious beings—gods, human beings, or subhuman creatures. These conscious entities are the various aspects of Brahman identified with and limited by diverse material bodies. This identification is the result of māyā. But Brahman Itself, unaffected by māyā, is the supreme controller.

The second part of the verse may also be explained in the following manner: At the beginning of a new cycle, Brahman brings into existence various Lords, ruling over different universes, and exercises His power over them all.

*The Supreme Lord is the omniscient and self-luminous controller of all things. His nature is indivisible Consciousness.*

## 4

As the sun shines, illumining all the quarters—above, below, and across—so also God, self-resplendent, adorable, and non-dual, controls all objects, which themselves possess the nature of a cause.

**ALL THE QUARTERS:** The various directions and the entities existing therein.

**GOD:** The Sanskrit word *Bhagavān*, in the text, refers to the Supreme Being, endowed with various supernatural powers.

**ADORABLE:** Brahman is adored by those who seek worldly prosperity as well as by those who want Liberation.

**CONTROLS:** By being their inner essence and ruler.

**WHICH THEMSELVES ETC:** Every entity in the phenomenal world functions both as a cause and as an effect.

*The Lord, by His very presence, causes the primary and the subsidiary prakṛiti to function in the relative world. He is the support of the universe, which is sustained by the causal law. He controls the three gunas, which manifest themselves in living beings according to merit and demerit acquired through actions in the previous cycle.*

## 5-6

He who is the cause of all and who enables all things to function according to their nature; who brings to maturity all that can be ripened; who, being non-dual, rules over the whole universe and engages the



gunas in their respective functions—He is concealed in the Upanishads, the secret part of the Vedas. Brahmā knew Him who can be known only from the evidence of the Vedas. The gods and seers of olden times who knew Him became Brahman and attained Immortality.

**ENABLES ALL THINGS ETC:** That fire burns, water flows downward, and all things follow their natural course is because the immutable Brahman is the unrelated support of the universe, just as the desert is the unrelated support of the mirage. Brahman is called *ritam*, or inviolable law. Brahman, not the material elements, is the cause of the universe.

**BRINGS TO ETC:** On account of Brahman's presence, all entities capable of maturing or of bearing fruit do so.

**GUNAS:** The three gunas constituting the inert prakriti cannot function without an intelligent agent, just as the law cannot be administered without an intelligent judge.

**SECRET ETC:** The Upanishads deal with the profound Knowledge of Ātman and Brahman, and cannot be understood without the help of a qualified preceptor.

**BRAHMĀ:** The first-created embodied being, to whom the Knowledge of Brahman was revealed by Brahman Itself.

**GODS:** Such as Agni and Varuna, mentioned in the Vedas.

**SEERS:** Refers to Vāmadeva and other illumined sages.

**KNEW HIM:** As their inmost Self.

**BECAME BRAHMAN ETC:** Compare: "He who knows the Supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman." (*Mu. Up. III. ii. 9.*)

*The statement "That thou art" gives the essence of the Vedic wisdom. The word That, as already pointed out, denotes the Great Lord, who is the very embodiment of Truth, Bliss, and Knowledge; who is non-dual, indivisible, and known only from the evidence of the Vedas; and who is the inmost Self of all. Now will be given the meaning of the word thou. It will be shown that this word denotes the jīva, or individual self, which in its true nature is untouched by cause and effect; which is the essence of Reality, Joy, and Consciousness; and which is eternal, unattached, and identical with the Supreme Ātman. That the individual self loses the knowledge of its true nature and appears as the phenomenal being, the doer of action and the experiencer of its result, is due to its association with such upādhis as the body and the senses; this is not its natural state.*

## 7

Endowed with *gunas*, the *jiva* performs action, seeking its fruit; and again, it reaps the fruit of what it has done. Assuming all forms and led by the three *gunas*, the *jiva*, ruler of the *prānas*, roams about following the three paths, according to its deeds.

**ENDOWED ETC:** The inborn tendencies of the *jiva* are constituted of the three *gunas*. These tendencies are produced from the subtle impressions created by the *jiva's* actions and thoughts in its previous birth. The *jiva's* general character is determined by the preponderance in it of a particular *guna*, though all the *gunas* are present. Under the influence of *sattva* a man follows the path of knowledge and detachment, and works in order to attain Liberation. Under the influence of *rajas* he acts primarily for the enjoyment of happiness here and hereafter. When his action is influenced by *tamas*, he will be reborn in the subhuman world.

**ASSUMING ETC:** Such as the forms of gods, men, animals, or insects. As explained in the previous note, the particular form is determined by a particular *guna*.

**PRĀNAS:** The five vital breaths, which keep the embodied being alive.

**THREE PATHS:** The paths of righteousness, unrighteousness, and knowledge. Or the paths may mean the Way of the Gods (*Devayāna*), the Way of the Fathers (*Pitriyāna*), and the path leading to rebirth as a worm or insect.

*The jiva is in reality none other than the non-dual Lord. Its various phenomenal characteristics, such as desire, volition, and egoism, are illusory superimpositions due to avidyā.*

## 8

Of the size of a thumb, but brilliant, like the sun, the *jiva* possesses both volition and egoism. It is endowed with the qualities of both *buddhi* and *Ātman*. Therefore it is seen as another entity, inferior, and small as the point of a goad.

**SIZE ETC:** The soul is said to dwell in the heart, occupying the space within it. The heart is described as being of the size of a thumb.

**BRILLIANT, ETC:** Referring to the luminosity inherent in the Self.

**JIVA:** Vedānta defines the *jiva* as Brahman reflected in or limited by the *buddhi*. This reflection or limitation is an appearance and not real.

**VOLITION AND EGOISM:** These are characteristics of the *buddhi* and not

of Ātman. As a transparent crystal appears to possess the colour of a flower lying near it, so Ātman appears to possess the qualities of the buddhi.

IT IS ENDOWED ETC: Identified with the buddhi, which is inert, Ātman appears to be ignorant. But in Its own nature Ātman is always conscious. The phenomenal jiva reveals both ignorance and Knowledge, the former being the quality of the buddhi, and the latter its own nature.

ANOTHER ETC: Ātman reflected in the buddhi seems to be different from the pure Ātman, just as the reflection of the sun seems to be different from the real sun.

SMALL ETC: Refers to the subtle nature of the jiva.

*That the jiva is described as subtle is due to its association with the subtle body.*

## 9

Know the embodied soul to be a part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times; and yet it is infinite.

The subtle body, which acts as the upādhi of the jiva, is extremely subtle. Identified with it, the jiva also is described as very subtle. But in reality it is none other than Brahman.

*When associated with the upādhi of the gross body, the jiva acquires the characteristics of that body.*

## 10

It is not female, it is not male, nor is it neuter. Whatever body it takes, with that it becomes united.

IT IS NOT ETC: Because the jiva is in reality identical with the non-dual Brahman, or Pure Consciousness.

WHATEVER ETC: Identified with the gross body, the jiva regards itself as male, female, or neuter, or as stout or thin, and so on. Sex, stoutness, etc. are the characteristics of the body, and not of the self.

*How does the jiva assume various bodies?*

## 11

By means of desires, contact, attachment, and delusion, the embodied soul assumes, successively, diverse forms in various places, according

to its deeds, just as the body grows when food and drink are poured into it.

**DIVERSE FORMS:** Forms as high as that of Hiranyagarbha or as low as that of an insect. First there arises a desire for an object, then the sense-organs come in contact with it, next the jiva grows attached to the object, and lastly it falls a victim to the delusion created by attachment. Thus it performs various deeds, righteous and unrighteous, and as a result assumes different kinds of bodies, one after another.

*The preceding verse has spoken of the diverse forms assumed by the embodied soul. What are these forms?*

## 12

The embodied soul, by means of good and evil deeds committed by itself, assumes many forms, coarse and fine. By virtue of its actions and also of such characteristics of the mind as knowledge and desire, it assumes another body for the enjoyment of [suitable] objects.

**GOOD ETC:** The nature of a deed is determined by the guna (sattva, rajas, or tamas) under whose influence the embodied being acts.

**MANY FORMS:** These include the bodies of the gods, human beings, animals, insects, etc.

**ACTIONS:** Lawful actions are those prescribed by the scriptures, and unlawful actions are the opposite.

**KNOWLEDGE AND DESIRE:** The word *knowledge* really means thought. Both thoughts and desires can be good or evil.

The subtle tendencies created by the individual soul's actions in its previous life are the cause of its union with its present body. (Compare Ka. Up. II. ii. 7.)

*The jiva, indicated by the word thou in the Vedic statement "That thou art," transmigrates in the phenomenal world, which is characterized by unceasing birth and death. Here, through the practice of Vedāntic disciplines, it rids itself of the attributes falsely superimposed by avidyā and realizes its oneness with Brahman. This realization of oneness is Liberation.*

## 13

He who knows the Lord, who is without beginning or end, who stands in the midst of the chaos [of the world], who is the Creator

of all things and is endowed with many forms—he who knows the radiant Deity, the sole Pervader of the universe, is released from all his fetters.

HE WHO ETC: Compare Śvet. Up. IV. 14, 16.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The jīva, under the weight of avidyā, desire, action, and its result, is drowned in the ocean of the world. Identifying itself with the body, it becomes individualized, and in the course of its wandering assumes many births: human, subhuman, and superhuman. At a certain time, by chance it performs righteous action and feels inclined to the spiritual life. Thus gradually it becomes free of attachment, passions, and other vices and realizes the transitory nature of the world. Consequently it cultivates dispassion for all enjoyments, here or hereafter, and practises the moral and spiritual disciplines prescribed by Vedāntic teachers. And in the end it attains Self-Knowledge and becomes liberated from the bondage of the world.

*The Supreme Lord, Himself without a support, is the cause of creation, preservation, and destruction. He can be known by the pure in heart. Through knowledge of Him one attains Liberation.*

#### 14

Those who know Him who can be realized by the pure heart, who is called incorporeal, who is the cause of creation and destruction, who is all good and the creator of the [sixteen] parts—those who know the luminous Lord are freed from embodiment.

CAUSE OF ETC: Or the passage may mean "the cause of the destruction of ignorance."

PARTS: For the sixteen parts, which constitute the embodied being, see Pr. Up. VI. 4.

FREED FROM ETC: That is to say, the knower of the Self is not born again in the world of ignorance.

*Here ends the Fifth Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*

## CHAPTER VI

SOME LEARNED MEN speak of the inherent nature of things, and some speak of time, [as the cause of the universe]. They all, indeed, are deluded. It is the greatness of the self-luminous Lord that causes the Wheel of Brahman to revolve.

SOME ETC: It has already been stated (See I. 2.) that neither the inherent nature of things nor time can be the first cause.

The universe is not a self-creating, self-evolving, and self-destroying entity. It is lifeless and inert. Brahman is the ultimate cause of the world process.

*Both the Lord and His greatness are described:*

### 2

He by whom the whole universe is constantly pervaded is the Knower, the Author of time. He is sinless and omniscient. It is at His command that the work which is called earth, water, fire, air, and ākāśa appears as the universe. All this should be reflected upon [by the wise].

KNOWER: He is the very stuff of consciousness.

AUTHOR ETC: Time is the destroyer of all material entities, but Brahman is the controller of time.

SINLESS: Or the word *guni*, in the text, may mean "endowed with the three gunas." This association with the gunas is due to māyā.

WORK ETC: There are two kinds of action. One is transformation, and the other, illusory superimposition. In the former instance, the cause gives up its own nature and becomes the effect. It is like milk's becoming curds. In the latter instance, the cause, without giving up its own nature, appears as the effect, as, for example, when a rope appears as a snake. According to Non-dualistic Vedānta, Brahman appears as the universe. First of all, Brahman appears as ākāśa; from ākāśa is produced air, from air fire, and so on. In the text the five elements are called work in the sense that they

all are falsely superimposed upon Brahman. These five elements appear as the universe, Brahman, which is Intelligence itself, is the controller of the universe.

*The nature of perfect Knowledge and the disciplines for its attainment:*

## 3

The yogi who first performs actions and then turns away from them, and who practises one, two, three, or eight [disciplines], unites one principle with another principle and with the help of virtues cultivated by the self and of subtle tendencies [acquired from actions in previous births] attains Liberation in course of time.

**PERFORMS ACTIONS:** That is to say, all his actions are performed as offerings to the Lord, as taught in the Bhagavad Gītā. Thus the aspirant's heart becomes pure.

**URNS ETC:** When a man performs his duties, regarding himself as an instrument of the Lord and surrendering the fruit to Him, he renounces as a result all duties, or they drop away from him. Thus he becomes entitled to the life of *sunyāsa*. The idea of duty is the result of attachment. (Compare *Yog. Sū. I. 15-16*.)

**ONE:** That is to say, service of the guru.

**TWO:** Love of God and love of the guru.

**THREE:** The Vedāntic disciplines of learning the truths of the scriptures with the help of a guru, reasoning about them, and finally meditating on them.

**EIGHT:** The eight disciplines of yoga laid down by Patanjali. (*Yog. Sū. II. 29-30*.)

**ONE PRINCIPLE:** A reference to "thou" in the Vedic statement "That thou art"—that is to say, the individual self, which in essence is the unattached witness of the activities of the body and the sense-organs and really remains unchanged during the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.

**ANOTHER PRINCIPLE:** Refers to "That" in the statement "That thou art." It denotes the Supreme Self.

**UNITES ETC:** The union of the individual self and the Supreme Self is realized in a direct and intuitive experience.

**VIRTUES ETC:** Such as compassion, charity, purity, benevolence, desirelessness, liberality, and freedom from malice.



**SUBTLE TENDENCIES:** The good tendencies accumulated from righteous actions in many past births.

**ATTAINS LIBERATION:** This state is described by Patanjali in *Yog. Su.* I. 3; IV. 33.

The text has been explained differently by different commentators. The present notes are based upon the interpretation by Vijnānabhagavad.

*The meaning of the foregoing verse is elaborated:*

## 4

He who attains purity of heart by performing actions as an offering to the Lord, and merges prakṛiti and all its effects in Brahman, realizes his true Self and thereby transcends phenomena. In the absence of māyā, both collective and individual, all his past actions [except the prārabdha] are destroyed [and he becomes liberated though still dwelling in the body]. After the destruction of the prārabdha karma he attains final Liberation.

**HE WHO ATTAINS ETC:** A reference to karma-yoga as described in *B. G.* IX. 27-28; V. 10-11. According to its instructions a man should perform his daily obligatory duties and also the duties prescribed for special occasions, regarding himself as God's instrument and surrendering the results to Him. Thus the impurities of his heart are destroyed and he is qualified for the higher disciplines of meditation and samādhi.

**MERGES ETC:** According to a well-known Vedāntic principle the effect is a mere name, a figure of speech to serve a practical purpose in life. It has no existence independent of the cause, which alone is real. For instance, a pot is made out of clay. What distinguishes the pot from the clay is a form designated by a name. In essence the pot is not different from the clay. The wise man sees the effect in the cause. This seeing is called the merging of the effect in the cause. All the separate gross entities, which are the effect of the collective gross entity, are made to merge in the latter. The collective gross entity is made to merge in its cause, the five gross elements, which in their turn are made to merge in the subtle elements. The subtle elements are made to merge in undifferentiated primordial matter (mulāprakṛiti), which, again, is made to merge in māyā. By this process the aspirant, as stated before, merges the effect in the cause, that is to say, regards the cause as non-different, in essence, from the effect. Now, māyā, the power of Brahman, has no independent existence; from the standpoint of Reality it is the same as Brahman. Therefore the wise aspirant merges māyā in Sachchidānanda. He realizes māyā to be the non-

dual Brahman, or homogeneous Consciousness. In other words, the aspirant, through a process of discrimination and concentration, makes the effect disappear into the cause and carries on this process till he arrives at Brahman. Brahman, being Ultimate Reality and the Causeless Cause, cannot be made to disappear into anything else. This is the Vedāntic method of attaining samādhi.

**REALIZES ETC:** That is to say, directly experiences oneness with the Supreme Self.

**TRANSCENDS ETC:** Because there no longer exists for him any phenomenal universe. He sees Brahman alone. The phenomenal universe, projected by māyā, is unreal.

**IN THE ABSENCE ETC:** The notion of action, actor, and result belongs to the realm of māyā. When māyā is destroyed by the Knowledge of Brahman, the impressions created by past actions are also destroyed. (B. G. IV. 37.) According to Vedāntic philosophers there are three kinds of actions: Some actions performed in the past have not yet begun to bear fruit. Others, known as prārabdha karma, began to bear fruit at the beginning of the present birth; indeed, the present body is the effect of such actions and will continue to function as long as their momentum lasts. Finally, there are the actions that the person is performing at the present time and whose result he will reap in the future. According to Vedānta, the Knowledge of Brahman destroys the first and last kinds of karma, but not the second. The body, following the momentum of this prārabdha karma, continues to live. The illumined person is not, however, affected by it, since he has already realized the unreality of the world. He leads an unattached life, never forgetting his true nature. His body, senses, and mind continue to perform their respective functions, and he may experience old age, blindness, deafness, pleasure and pain, and the like, which are the characteristics of the body, senses, etc. But he regards them as one regards magic—enjoying it and at the same time knowing it to be unreal. This is called the state of Jivanmukti, or Freedom in the body. After the prārabdha karma has completely exhausted itself, the body dies and the Knower of Brahman attains final Liberation, called Videha Mukti.

*The seeker should worship the Great Lord in order to attain the Knowledge of Reality.*

The Great Lord is the beginning, the cause which unites [the soul with the body]; He is above the three kinds of time and is seen to be without parts. After having worshipped that adorable God dwelling

in the heart, who is of many forms and is the true source of all things, [man attains final Liberation.]

BEGINNING: The primal cause of all things.

CAUSE ETC: The soul, through avidyā, becomes united with the body. The Lord is the cause of avidyā, which manifests itself as good and evil. Attachment to good and evil is the cause of embodiment.

ABOVE ETC: Compare: "Other than what has been and what is to be" (Ka. Up. I. ii. 14); "At whose feet, rolling on, the year with its days passes by" (Br. Up. IV. iv. 16).

WORSHIPPED ETC: That is to say, one should meditate on Him as being one with the self.

The passage in the second brackets is taken from the previous verse, to which the present one is related.

## 6

He from whom this universe proceeds is higher and other than all forms of the Tree [of the World] and of time. When one knows Him who is the indweller, the bringer of good, the destroyer of evil, the Lord of powers, the immortal support of all, [one attains final Liberation].

OTHER THAN ETC: That is to say, totally unattached to the universe.

TREE: The universe is often compared to a tree. (See Ka. Up. II. iii. 1; B. G. XV. 1.)

POWERS: The six great powers, namely, total power, dharma, glory, affluence, knowledge, and renunciation. They are the characteristics of the Lord.

This verse, like the preceding one, is related to verse 4.

*The nature of the Supreme Lord as revealed to the wise:*

## 7

We know Him who is the Supreme Lord of lords, the Supreme Deity of deities, the Ruler of rulers; who is higher than the imperishable prakṛiti and is the self-luminous, adorable Lord of the world.

WE: The wise.

LORD OF LORDS: The lords here referred to are the heavenly powers that control the sun, death, etc. Or they may signify Brahmā, Vishnu, and

Rudra, who are known as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe. These deities are under the control of Brahman, the Supreme Lord.

**DEITY OF DEITIES:** The deities are Indra, Varuna, etc. These deities derive their powers from the Supreme Lord.

**RULER OF RULERS:** The rulers are Hiranyagarbha, or the Cosmic Mind, in His various aspects, such as Brahmā, Prajāpati, and Virāt.

**IMPERISHABLE PRAKRITI:** Refers to the māyāśakti, or power, of Brahman. It is the germ of all perishable entities and manifests itself through various illusory forms. Nothing but the Knowledge of Brahman can destroy māyā; therefore, relatively speaking, it is called imperishable. Māyā, the material cause of the universe, has its support in Brahman.

**ADORABLE:** The Vedas, Smritis, and all other sacred books extol Brahman.

Through the realization of oneness with Brahman, man attains the Highest Good and the fulfilment of all his endeavours. The creation contains innumerable universes, with their many deities, lords, rulers, Prajāpatis, etc. Brahman is the Supreme Lord of all. (For a discussion of the subject, see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 71 ff.)

### *The nature of the Supreme Lord:*

#### 8

He is without a body or organs; none like unto Him is seen, or better [than He]. The Vedas speak of His exalted power, which is innate and capable of producing diverse effects, and also of His omniscience and might.

**THE VEDAS ETC:** The doctrine of māyā is based on Vedic revelation and not on human reasoning.

**EXALTED POWER:** The passage refers to the māyāśakti, by which the phenomenal universe is created, preserved, and ultimately destroyed. This power is called exalted because it is superior to its manifestations in the form of diverse entities.

**INNATE:** Māyā by its very nature inheres in Brahman.

**CAPABLE . . . DIVERSE ETC:** This characteristic is known from the multiplicity of created objects.

**MIGHT:** By His very presence the Lord animates inert prakṛiti into action.

Therefore:

## 9

He has no master in the world, no ruler, nor is there even a sign of Him [by which He can be inferred]. He is the cause, the Lord of the lord of the organs; and He is without progenitor or controller.

**NOR . . . SIGN:** The existence of an unseen object can be inferred from a sign, as the existence of fire from smoke; for fire and smoke are seen to exist together. But that is not true of Brahman. The Lord alone exists. He is one and without a second. One who perceives Him sees nothing else. Therefore it is said that the reality of the Lord cannot be inferred from any characteristic sign. His nature is undifferentiated Consciousness. The Vedas alone are the proof of His existence. (Compare *Ka. Up.* II. iii. 8.)

**CAUSE:** The word is used here in the sense of unrelated substratum, such as, for example, the desert with reference to a mirage. One who has not heard about the desert from some other source cannot infer its existence merely from the mirage. Likewise, from the investigation of the phenomenal universe alone one cannot infer the existence of Brahman or know Its nature.

**LORD . . . ORGANS:** The embodied soul (*jīvātmā*) is the lord of the organs of perception and of action. Brahman is the Lord of the embodied soul.

*Now the Vedic seer prays for the attainment of his goal, namely, oneness with Brahman:*

## 10

May the non-dual Lord, who, by the power of His *māyā*, covered Himself, like a spider, with threads drawn from primal matter (*pradhāna*), merge us in Brahman!

**THREADS . . . MATTER:** The word *pradhāna* refers to primal matter in its undifferentiated state, the first entity to be evolved from the contact of Purusha with prakṛiti, which is the germ of all material appearances. The word *threads* signifies the manifestations of matter in the phenomenal world, such as name, form, and action. The Lord is covered by His own *māyā*. The creation is a spontaneous action on His part and not the result of necessity or of any outer compulsion.

**MERGE ETC:** The seer prays for complete identity with Brahman.

*The two following verses reveal Brahman as tangibly as though It were a fruit in the palm of one's hand and show that the Knowledge of Brahman alone bestows the Highest Good and Supreme Bliss:*

## 11

The non-dual and resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the inmost Self of all creatures, the impeller to actions, abiding in all things, He is the Witness, the Animator, and the Absolute, free from gunas.

**NON-DUAL:** The multiplicity of Ātman is refuted by this epithet. The apparent multiplicity is the result of nescience.

**RESPLENDENT:** That Ātman is a material substance is denied. Its nature is indivisible Consciousness.

**HIDDEN ETC:** The resplendence of Ātman is concealed by the veil of ignorance, as the light of the sun is concealed by a patch of cloud.

**ALL-PERVADING:** Permeating all things, both within and without, like ākāśa.

**INMOST ETC:** As the rope is the true self of the illusory snake, so Ātman is the true self of all material entities. As the notion of the snake, line of water, or stick is falsely superimposed upon the rope, so the notions of corporeality, birth, death, etc. are falsely superimposed upon Ātman.

**IMPELLER ETC:** The body, senses, mind, ego, etc., being inert and material, cannot of themselves perform any action. Through the proximity of Ātman, which is Pure Consciousness, they become active, like iron filings in the presence of a magnet. (Compare B. G. XVIII. 61.)

**ABIDING ETC:** Though Ātman abides in all things, yet It is not affected by their good or evil characteristics, because It is unattached. The sky, on account of its detached nature, is not contaminated by such extraneous things as dust or smoke.

**WITNESS:** The serene spectator of the activities of the body, senses, and mind, and of the outside world as well.

**ANIMATOR:** By the presence of Ātman, the mind, senses, prāna, body, etc. are impelled to action.

**ABSOLUTE:** The Consciousness that is the very stuff of Ātman is free from birth, growth, decay, or death. If it were subject to change, then one would have to admit the existence of another Consciousness that was the perceiver of such change. This method of reasoning leads to an infinite regress. The Consciousness of Ātman is absolute, that is to say, independent of any outside object. In its pure state Consciousness is without content. Self-Knowledge destroys the illusory duality of subject and object.

**FREE FROM ETC:** That is to say, free from sattva, rajas, and tamas. These gunas are responsible for creation, preservation, and destruction. The acts of creation, preservation, and destruction are superimposed upon Ātman through avidyā; hence they do not form Its real nature. Ātman, as Pure Consciousness, is described by the negative method of *Neti*—"Not this."

## 12

There is a non-dual Ruler of the actionless many; He makes the one seed manifold. Eternal happiness belongs to the wise, who perceive Him within themselves—and not to others.

**RULER:** All things are under the control of the Lord. He Himself is independent.

**ACTIONLESS MANY:** Refers both to the embodied soul (jīva) and to its body, senses, mind, prāna, etc., which are modifications of matter and hence inert. In essence the jīva, too, is Brahman, absolute and all peace; it is free from activity. The apparent activity of the jīva is the result of māyā.

**SEED:** Māyā is the seed or source of prakṛiti, which is formed of the five elements of matter. (See B. G. VII. 4.) The Supreme Self, or Brahman, is the seed or source of the jīva, or individual soul.

**MANIFOLD:** Refers to the diverse entities of the phenomenal world.

**ETERNAL ETC:** See *Ka. Up.* II. ii. 12.

**WISE:** Those who have practised such spiritual disciplines as discrimination, dispassion, and the various moral virtues.

**WHO PERCEIVE ETC:** That is to say, who perceive Brahman in their purified buddhi. The passage refers to the realization of the identity of Brahman and the jīva.

Eternal happiness results from the realization of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Self. Neither concrete worship nor action can produce this happiness. Worship presupposes the duality of the worshipper and the deity, and action is associated with the doer, the instrument, and the result. Wherever there is consciousness of duality there is a seed of fear and friction.

*The Supreme Lord is eternal. He is the embodiment of Consciousness and the bestower of the fruit of action, to be realized through Knowledge. Realization of the Lord is Liberation.*

## 13

He is the Eternal among the eternal, the Conscious among the conscious, and though non-dual, fulfils the desires of many. He who



has known Him, the luminous Lord, the Great Cause, to be realized by Sāmkhya (Knowledge) and yoga, is freed from all fetters.

HE IS ETC: See *Ka. Up.* II. ii. 13.

ETERNAL ETC: The word *eternal* signifies the *jivas*. In essence the *jivas* are none other than the Lord; that is why they too are called eternal. Or "among the eternal"—*nityānām*—may mean, by a grammatical twist, "among the non-eternal"—*anītyānām*. In that case the passage signifies that the Lord is the unchanging ground of the sun, moon, earth, etc., which constitute phenomenal existence and are superimposed upon Him through *avidyā*. The Lord is the unchanging substratum of the entire changing universe during its creation, preservation, and dissolution.

CONSCIOUS ETC: The deities and other living beings derive their intelligence and consciousness from the Supreme Self, just as a piece of hot iron derives its power to burn from fire. Without the Consciousness of *Ātman* all entities would be inert.

NON-DUAL: The Lord is the inmost Self of all creatures, from *Brahmā* to the ant.

FULFILLS ETC: It is the Lord who brings about the fruition of man's actions according to the law of *karma*. The law cannot function by itself. It must be administered by the intelligence of the Lord. Or the passage may mean that the Lord fulfils the desires of His devotees.

SĀMKHYA: The Knowledge of oneness realized through contemplation of such Vedic statements as "I am He" and "That thou art."

YOGA: The word refers here to the following spiritual disciplines: receiving instruction from a qualified teacher (*śṛavanam*), reasoning about them (*mananam*), and contemplating their meaning (*nididhyāsanam*).

FETTERS: That is to say, ignorance, desires, and actions.

Through the direct realization of the Lord, the *jiva* frees itself from its phenomenal superimpositions and attains Liberation.

*Brahman is the illuminer of radiant objects; but Its own luminosity is inherent.*

#### 14

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings—much less this fire. He shining, everything shines after Him. By his light all this is lighted.

SUN: The sun illumines all material objects, but it cannot illumine *Brahman*.

THERE: That is to say, in Brahman, which is the inmost Self of everything.

It is only the heat in boiling water that scalds; the water, of itself, cannot do so. Likewise, the sun, the moon, and other bright objects are not themselves luminous; it is the light of Brahman that endows them with light. The self-luminosity of Brahman is known directly by the seers in the depths of their meditation; it may be inferred from the light of the sun, moon, and other objects. That Ātman is self-luminous may also be known from the various manifestations of ego, such as "I feel," "I think," and "I know." The ego itself is inert and non-intelligent. The most convincing proof of Brahman is, however, direct realization.

This verse is the same as *Ka. Up. II. ii. 15.* and *Mu. Up. II. ii. 10.* (Compare *B. G. XV. 6.*)

*It is said that the jiva is liberated only through the realization of the Self. How is it that there is no other way of Liberation?*

## 15

In this universe the Swan (the Supreme Self) alone exists. It is He who, as fire, abides in the water. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death. There is no other way to reach [the Supreme Goal].

SWAN: The etymological meaning of the word *hamsa* is "destroyer of ignorance." Therefore it denotes the Supreme Self.

FIRE: The word *agni* also denotes the Supreme Self, which consumes ignorance, as fire burns wood.

WATER: Used here to denote the body, which contains a preponderance of the element water. (See *Br. Up. VI. ii. 2-13.*) Or the word may indicate the heart, which, when purified by worship, the making of gifts, and other spiritual disciplines, becomes clear, like water. The Supreme Self reflected in the pure heart destroys ignorance and its effects.

DEATH: That is to say, *avidyā*, which is the cause of *samsāra*, or phenomenal existence, with its unceasing round of births and deaths.

The only way to transcend death and realize Immortality is to know the identity of one's own self and the Supreme Self.

*That the attainment of the Highest Good is possible only through the Knowledge of the Lord is again emphasized:*

## 16

He who is the support of both the unmanifested prakṛiti and the jīva, who is the Lord of the three guṇas, and who is the cause of bondage, existence, and Liberation from saṃsāra, is verily the Creator of the universe, the Knower, the inmost Self of all things, and their Source—the omniscient Lord, the Author of time, the Possessor of virtues, the Knower of everything.

**SUPPORT ETC:** The rope is the support of the illusory snake erroneously superimposed upon it. Further, it is the reality of the rope that makes the snake appear to be real. It is the same with the unmanifested prakṛiti (avyakta) and the jīva, both of which are erroneously superimposed upon Brahman. Without the substratum of Brahman neither would appear real.

**CAUSE ETC:** Ignorance of the Lord brings about the illusion of the creation, and the non-discriminating person becomes entangled in the world. Knowledge of the Lord liberates one from it.

**VIRTUES:** Such as sinlessness and love.

*Furthermore:*

## 17

He who constantly rules the world is verily the cause of bondage and Liberation. Established in His own glory, He is the Immortal, the Embodiment of Consciousness, the omnipresent Protector of the universe. There is no one else able to rule it.

**CAUSE ETC:** See the note on the foregoing verse. Or the word *tanmaya*, in the text, here translated as "the cause of bondage and Liberation," may mean radiant.

*Because the Lord alone is the cause of a man's bondage and Liberation, the aspirant should take refuge in Him with heart and soul.*

## 18

Seeking Liberation, I take refuge in the Lord, the revealer of Self-Knowledge, who in the beginning created Brahmā and delivered the Vedas to Him.

**REVEALER OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE:** Or the phrase *ātma buddhi prakāśam* may mean "the light of His own Knowledge." According to another reading

(*ātmā buddhi prasādam*) the meaning is: "who lets Himself be known through His own grace." When the Lord is pleased, the intellect, which reveals Him, acquires the necessary clarity.

IN THE BEGINNING: At the beginning of the cycle.

BRAHMĀ: The first tangible manifestation of the attributeless Brahman in the relative universe. He is the personified totality of all created objects.

DELIVERED ETC: The teachings of the Vedas come through a succession of illumined teachers. At the end of a cycle, when the whole universe goes back to the undifferentiated state, there remains no teacher to preserve and transmit the Vedas. The Vedic knowledge then remains merged in Brahman. At the beginning of the new cycle, the Lord creates Brahmā and reveals the Vedas to Him. Brahmā, in turn, transmits the Vedic knowledge to a qualified teacher. Thus a new line of teachers comes into existence for the preservation and propagation of the Vedic lore.

*The nature of Brahman:*

19-20

When men shall roll up space (*ākāśa*) as if it were a piece of hide, then there will be an end of misery without one's cultivating the Knowledge of the Lord, who is without parts, without actions, tranquil, blameless, unattached, the supreme bridge to Immortality, and like a fire that has consumed all its fuel.

WHEN ETC: Just as it is never possible to roll up the *ākāśa* as one does a piece of hide, so it is utterly impossible to put an end to misery without the Knowledge of the Lord. Only when the impossible happens will misery cease without one's realizing God in one's heart.

WITHOUT PARTS: That is to say, incorporeal. Brahman is Pure Consciousness.

WITHOUT ACTIONS: The Lord is established in His own greatness. He does not need to work in order to manifest His power. The creation is *māyā*. The Lord in reality is the Absolute.

TRANQUIL: Free from all changes and modifications.

SUPREME ETC: The Knowledge of one's identity with Brahman alone serves as the bridge by which one may cross the great ocean of *samsāra* and reach the other shore of Immortality.

LIKE ETC: Brahman is free from the slightest trace of phenomenality. It is like blazing charcoal which burns radiantly after the wood is consumed.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

As long as a person does not realize that he is one with the Supreme Self,

he is afflicted by various miseries, physical, mental, and supraphysical. Like a person floating in the ocean and tormented by sharks and other ferocious sea-animals, he wanders about in the phenomenal world as an embodied being, a victim of anger, lust, passion, etc., assuming animal bodies, insect bodies, or human bodies. When, however, he realizes that he is the Supreme Self—which is without peer in the past or future, which is untouched by such worldly qualities as hunger and thirst, which is the embodiment of Consciousness, which is without beginning or end, and which is Bliss Absolute—he rids himself of ignorance and its effects and experiences ineffable Bliss.

The Bhagavad Gītā states: "Knowledge is veiled in ignorance, and thereby mortals are deluded. But for those in whom this ignorance is destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, that Knowledge, like the sun, reveals the Supreme. Fixing their minds in Him, at one with Him, abiding in Him, realizing Him alone as the Supreme Goal, they reach a state from which there is no return, their sins having been destroyed by their Knowledge." (B. G. V. 15-17.)

*The Vedic teachings have been transmitted through a succession of teachers. When aspirants who have practised the proper spiritual disciplines pursue these teachings, through the grace of God they attain Liberation.*

## 21

Through the power of austerity and through the grace of the Lord, the sage Śvetāśvatara realized Brahman and proclaimed the highly sacred Knowledge, supremely cherished by the company of seers, to sannyāsins of the most advanced stage.

**AUSTERITY:** The word generally refers to penances and self-mortification. It also includes the performance of the duties suited to one's stage of life and position in society, the control of the senses, and the concentration of the mind.

**GRACE ETC:** Compare *Br. Su.* III. ii. 5.

**REALIZED BRAHMAN:** First the sage heard about Brahman from a qualified teacher who had received the Knowledge through a succession of teachers; then he reasoned about the instructions he had heard; and finally he meditated on them. Thus he directly and intuitively realized his oneness with Brahman.

**COMPANY ETC:** Refers to Vāmadeva, Sanaka, and other illumined souls.

**SANNYĀSINS ETC:** Sannyāsins are those who renounce the world, having

realized its transitory nature, and devote themselves to the Knowledge of Brahman. There are different grades of these renouncers. The reference here is to those belonging to the highest grade, known as paramahansas.

*The Knowledge of Brahman should be imparted only after thoroughly considering the fitness of the pupil. In unworthy hands it loses its profundity and sacredness.*

## 22

The profound mystery in the Vedānta was taught in the previous cycle. It should not be given to one whose passions have not been subdued, nor to one who is not a son or a disciple.

**PROFOUND MYSTERY:** That is to say, the Knowledge of Brahman, which shows the way to final Liberation.

**VEDĀNTA:** The word refers here to the Upanishads, which form the essence and the concluding part (anta) of the Vedas.

**PREVIOUS CYCLE:** The teachings of the Vedas are eternal and immutable. They are revealed in the same form in every cycle. (See Br. Su. I. iii. 29.) Or the phrase may indicate the beginning of the present cycle, when the Knowledge was revealed to Brahmā by Brahman Itself.

**PASSIONS:** Attachment, aversion, etc.

The teachings of the Upanishads should be imparted only to a son or disciple endowed with inner calmness; otherwise these teachings produce a harmful effect. (Compare Br. Up. VI. iii. 12.)

*The Upanishad taught by the guru bears fruit only for that aspirant who cherishes devotion to the Lord and to the teacher.*

## 23

If these truths have been told to a high-minded person who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his guru as for God, then they will surely shine forth [as inner experiences]—then, indeed, they will shine forth.

**THESE TRUTHS:** Described in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.

**HIGHEST DEVOTION:** Unwavering reverence.

**FOR HIS GURU ETC:** It is God who teaches the disciple through an illumined human teacher.

THEN, INDEED, ETC: The repetition indicates the completion of the Upanishad.

As a man whose hair is on fire seeks nothing but a plunge in a lake, or as a starving man wants nothing but a plate of food, so a noble-minded aspirant, afflicted with the miseries of phenomenal existence, seeks nothing but the grace of the guru, without which the Knowledge of Brahman is, indeed, hard to attain.

*Here ends the Sixth Chapter  
of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*

*Here ends the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.*



## THE PEACE CHANT

OM. That is full; this is full. This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Om. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajāpati!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!



# PRAŚNA UPANISHAD



## INTRODUCTION

IT HAS BEEN STATED in the Introduction to the *Mundaka Upanishad* that both the *Mundaka Upanishad* and the *Praśna Upanishad* belong to the Atharva-Veda. They are complementary in their teachings: what is briefly taught in the one is expanded in the other.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* deals with the lower knowledge and the Higher Knowledge; the *Praśna Upanishad*, with prāna, the symbol of the Lower Brahman and the goal of the lower knowledge.

As in some other Upanishads, the instructions in the *Praśna Upanishad* are given in the form of dialogues between a teacher and his disciples. The practice of austerity, faith, and chastity of body and mind are emphasized as special qualifications on the part of pupils seeking deep spiritual knowledge.

The Upanishad commences with a description of the creation of living beings. The first entity to be manifested in the phenomenal universe is the Cosmic Mind, known by such names as prāna, Prajāpati, Brahmā, and Hiranyagarbha. He is the totality of all souls and permeates all living beings. The entire creation—gross and subtle, macrocosmic and microcosmic—is the projection of prāna. Prāna manifests itself as the sun (the source of the cosmic energy), time, and food. Food is the direct cause of the birth of living beings. The creation is spiritual and not mechanistic.

The second chapter describes prāna as the life-force in the individual living being. The various organs are said to be subordinated to it and sustained by it.

The third chapter discusses the origin of prāna, or the vital breath. It is said to be produced from Ātman through the power of avidyā. In the individual body, created by a man's action and thought in his previous life, prāna, through its fivefold forms, controls the various organs.

The fourth chapter deals with the states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. Prāna sustains the body during all these states. In dreams the sense-organs are gathered into the mind, which creates the

dream objects from the impressions of waking experience. In deep sleep the mind, too, stops functioning; the Bliss of Ātman, covered only by the veiling-power of māyā, becomes manifest. But the Supreme Self, known as Turiya, is separate from the three states and is their witness. It permeates them, however, as consciousness.

The fifth chapter deals with the syllable AUM (generally written OM) as the symbol of both the Lower Brahman and the Supreme Brahman. By meditating on it the aspirant can enjoy the bliss of the highest heaven and attain final Liberation as well.

The sixth and last chapter discusses the phenomenal being composed of sixteen parts. It is Ātman alone that, through avidyā, appears as the phenomenal being endowed with parts. On the attainment of Knowledge, avidyā and its effects disappear and the individual soul realizes its oneness with the Supreme Ātman.

S. N.

## ŚRĪ ŚANKARĀCHĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION

OM. Salutations to the Supreme Ātman!

Now begins the *Praśna Upanishad*, belonging to the *Brāhmaṇa* section<sup>1</sup> of the *Atharva-Veda*. Its purpose is to elaborate what is merely stated in the *Mundaka Upanishad*.<sup>2</sup> The questions and answers among the *rishis*, given in the form of an anecdote, are for the purpose of eulogizing *Vidyā*, the Knowledge taught in the *Upanishad*. The Knowledge which is about to be described can be acquired only by those who reside in their teacher's house for one year, practising *brahmacharya*<sup>3</sup> and other austerities, and can be imparted only by a teacher like *Pippalāda*, who is almost omniscient—not anyone and everyone can be either a receiver or a teacher of this Knowledge. That celibacy and chastity should be practised by the pupil is indicated by the mention of such spiritual disciplines as *brahmacharya* and austerity.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The *Mundaka Upanishad* belongs to the *Mantra* section, and the *Praśna Upanishad*, to the *Brāhmaṇa* section, of the *Atharva-Veda*. They both deal, in a general way, with the same subject matter: what is briefly stated in the one is elaborated in the other. Thus they may be said to be complementary.

<sup>3</sup> The first of the four stages of life; the life of an unmarried student. (See *Self-Knowledge*, p. 18 ff.)



## INVOCATION

Om. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajāpati!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

## QUESTION I

OM, SUKEŚĀ, the son of Bharadvāja, and Satyakāma, the son of Śibi, and Sauryāyani, belonging to the family of Garga, and Kausalya, the son of Aśvala, and Vaidarbhi, belonging to the family of Bhrigu, and Kabandhi, the son of Katya—all these, devoted to Brahman and firm in Brahman, and seeking the Supreme Brahman, approached, fuel in hand, the venerable Pippalāda with the thought that he would tell them everything about Brahman.

**SAURYĀYANI:** According to the etymological meaning, the grandson of Sūrya.

**VAIDARBHI:** Born in the country of Vidarbha.

**DEVOTED TO BRAHMAN:** That is to say, devoted to Saguna Brahman, or Brahman with attributes. He is the highest manifestation of the Absolute, through māyā, in time and space, and is generally worshipped as the Personal God in the various religions. These seekers regarded the Lower Brahman as the Supreme Brahman and worshipped Him. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 25 ff.)

**SUPREME BRAHMAN:** Which alone is imperishable and should be the goal of man's knowledge. Saguna Brahman is perishable, and the heaven attained through worship of Him is also perishable. Hence He cannot be the final goal of knowledge. The Knowledge of the Supreme Brahman alone bestows Immortality.

**APPROACHED:** After the manner of a disciple.

**FUEL ETC:** According to the Hindu tradition, a pupil seeking Knowledge should not approach a teacher empty-handed. The carrying of fuel denotes the pupil's humility and his willingness to serve the teacher in all possible ways.

*The need of faith, austerity, and chastity of body and mind for attaining spiritual knowledge is emphasized:*

## 2

The rishi said to them: Stay with me a year more, practising austerities, chastity, and faith. Then you may ask questions according to your desire. If we know we shall tell you all.

**RISHI:** Lit., seer of Truth.

**AUSTERITIES:** Control of the sense-organs, which purifies the mind and makes it one-pointed.

**CHASTITY:** By means of brahmacharya, or chastity, the mind develops the subtle power to apprehend supersensuous truths and also the strength to persevere in the spiritual life.

**FAITH:** A spirit of reverence for the teacher and the scriptures; an affirmative attitude of mind as opposed to a cynical and negative one.

**IF WE KNOW ETC:** The statement shows the teacher's humility and not his ignorance. A person cannot be a rishi and be ignorant of Truth.

The pupil should submit willingly and cheerfully to the practice of spiritual disciplines. The purpose of the story is to show that the teacher must be endowed with knowledge and humility and that the pupil should cultivate faith and self-control. Without faith the pupil cannot grasp the teachings of the scriptures as explained by the teacher.

*Kabandhi returns after a year and asks his question:*

## 3

Then Kabandhi, the son of Katya, came to him and asked: Sir, whence are these creatures born?

**CREATURES:** Including human beings of all castes and classes.

The pupils had come to Pippalāda with a view to asking about the Supreme Brahman. The question about the creation may appear to be irrelevant. The answer describes the lower knowledge, its scope, and its results, all of which belong to the phenomenal universe. When one realizes the impermanent nature of the relative world, one cultivates dispassion for it. As long as a man remains ignorant of the Supreme Brahman, he engages in the worship of various deities, including Saguna Brahman, and enjoys transitory happiness. The man who worships Saguna Brahman with appropriate rituals follows, after death, the "Northern Path" and attains Brahmaloaka, the highest plane in the relative universe. He who performs mere philanthropic works, without meditation on the deities, follows the "Southern Path" and attains Chandraloaka, an inferior plane. Those who have realized

the impermanent nature of happiness in any plane of existence, higher or lower, and have cultivated dispassion for them, alone are entitled to inquire about the Supreme Brahman. They are no longer interested in any action, ritualistic or philanthropic; they devote themselves to the contemplation and realization of the Supreme Brahman.

*The creation is described:*

4

To him the teacher said: Prajāpati, the Creator, was desirous of progeny. He performed austerities, and having performed austerities, created the pair, the moon (rayi) and the sun (prāna). He said to Himself: "These two should produce creatures for Me in manifold ways."

**PRAJĀPATI:** The Creator in a particular cycle. The Vedas do not accept the idea of an absolute creation out of nothing. The present manifestation of the tangible physical universe proceeds from the state of non-manifestation, in which the names and forms of the previous cycle, after it had come to an end, remained in a seed state. According to the teachings of the Vedas, a highly developed rishi cherishes the desire to become Prajāpati, the Creator Lord, and with that end in view contemplates his identity with the Creator and performs a special sacrifice. At the beginning of the next cycle he is born as the Creator and becomes known by such names as Prajāpati, Hiranyagarbha, and Brahmā, all signifying the Cosmic Mind. Then through intense contemplation, which is called austerity, or tapas, the Creator awakens in His mind the subtle impressions of the Vedic knowledge acquired in His previous birth. With the help of that knowledge He sets about the task of creation. First He creates the sun (Surya) and the moon (Soma), which stand for the eater and the food respectively. Without them the creation cannot be preserved. The whole creation is a phantasm (kalpanā) or projection of the mind of the Creator. From this standpoint the universe is an idea.

**MOON:** The Sanskrit word *rayi* (feminine), in the text, means both food and wealth. Cereals, or food, which are acquired through wealth, are nourished by the moisture, or dew, coming through the moon's rays. (See B. G. XV. 13.)

**SUN:** The Sanskrit word *prāna* (masculine) means both the life principle and the eater. The sun, in one of its aspects (i.e. the gastric fire) digests food. (See B. G. XV. 14.)

The words *moon* and *sun*, in the text, may also mean matter and life, or energy. At the beginning of creation the undifferentiated Cosmic Principle evolves matter and energy, which, in turn, evolve the various material entities.

*The Upanishad itself explains the two words sun and moon mentioned in the previous verse:*

## 5

The sun is, indeed, *prāna*, life; the moon is *rayi*, food. Food is, indeed, all this—what has form and what is formless. Therefore everything having form is, indeed, food.

**THE SUN ETC:** There are three manifestations of *prāna*: the sun in the heavens, physical fire (produced by burning wood etc.), and the gastric fire. *Prāna* is the eater.

**FOOD IS, INDEED, ETC:** Food, or matter, being all-pervading, is the same as the all-pervading *Prajāpati*. According to Vedānta, the cause is, in essence, non-different from the effect. The cause manifests itself as the effect and pervades it. *Prajāpati* manifests Himself as food and eater, the moon and the sun, and pervades them.

**THEREFORE ETC:** As distinguished from entities without form. The entity with form is the food of the entity without form. The former merges in the latter.

The general meaning of the text seems to be this: *Prajāpati*, the Creator, is the cause of all things. He pervades everything. He is both food and eater. Therefore both food (*rayi*) and eater (*prāna*) refer to the same substance. The division is made according to the gross or subtle nature of the substance. The gross is called food, and the subtle, eater. Again, the subtle (e.g. air), becomes the food of the more subtle (e.g. *ākāśa*). Therefore the gross and the subtle (i.e. what has form and what is formless) can both be designated as food (*rayi*). From the standpoint of the division mentioned above, all objects having form become the food of the incorporeal *prāna*: the gross is the food, or effect, of the subtle.

To continue the general note given at the end of verse 4: Energy and matter are the first two manifestations of the Cosmic Mind. The sun, being the centre of energy, is identified with *prāna*, or the cosmic energy. The moon, devoid of heat and light, is identified with inert matter. Whatever object is perceived to exist in the universe—gross or subtle, with form or without form—is matter. Even the subtlest substance is a form of matter.

The foregoing verse described rayi, food, as Prajāpati, because Prajāpati manifests Himself as food. Because He is everything, food is said to be everything. The same is true of intangible prāna, the sun or eater. Prāna, likewise, is everything.

## 6

Now the sun, when it rises, enters the eastern quarter and thereby enfolds the living beings of the east in its rays. And when it illuminates the southern, the western, the northern, the lower, the upper, and the intermediate quarters—when it illuminates everything—it thus enfolds all living beings in its rays.

ENTERS: That is to say, illuminates with its rays.

ENFOLDS: The sun, by pervading all with its light, makes all living beings of the east as if one with its own self. The living beings are bathed in the all-pervading rays of the sun.

*It is evident to all that the sun, the eater, is the soul of all things.*

## 7-8

That sun rises every day—the sun, which is the soul of all creatures, the soul of all forms, which is life and fire. This has been described by the following rik:

[The wise know him who] is in all forms, full of rays, all-knowing, non-dual, the support of all life, the eye of all beings, the giver of heat. There rises the sun, the thousand-rayed, existing in a hundred forms, the life of all creatures.

RIK: A kind of hymn, of which the Rig-Veda is composed, set to certain fixed melodies.

HUNDRED FORMS: Referring to the diversity of living beings.

The Upanishads often use prāna and the sun as symbols of Brahman. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 83 ff. and p. 86.)

*It has been stated that Prajāpati, the Creator, first created the moon and the sun. The moon has been described as food and as endowed with form, and the sun as the eater and as formless. Created beings are produced from these two. How is this done? The next manifestation of*

*Prajāpati is the year, or time, brought into being by the moon and the sun and consisting of night and day.*

## 9

The year, verily, is Prajāpati, and there are two paths thereof: the Southern and the Northern. Those who perform sacrifices and engage in pious actions, as duties to be done, win only the World of the Moon; verily they return hither again. Therefore the rishis who desire offspring travel by the Southern Path. This Path of the Fathers is rayi, food.

**YEAR ETC:** The year may consist of solar or lunar months, determined by the rising and setting of either the sun or the moon. From one sunrise to the next is counted a solar day. Thirty solar days constitute a solar month, and twelve solar months, a solar year. Likewise, two lunar fortnights, a bright and a dark, constitute a lunar month, and twelve lunar months a lunar year. Prajāpati manifests Himself as the pair, the sun and the moon; and this pair constitutes the year. Therefore the year, or time, is none other than Prajāpati. According to Vedānta, the cause is non-different, in essence, from the effect. The sun and the moon, in turn, through time, create all beings.

**SOUTHERN:** This path is traversed by those whose performance of sacrifices etc. (karma) is not accompanied by meditation on the deity associated with the sacrifice (upāsana).

**NORTHERN:** This path is followed by those whose performance of sacrifices is accompanied by meditation on the deity.

**SACRIFICES:** The Sanskrit word *ishta*, in the text, is thus defined: "The Agnihotra (fire sacrifice), austerity, truthfulness, the protection of living beings, hospitality to men, and the feeding of animals are called ishta."

**PIOUS ACTIONS:** The Sanskrit word *purta*, in the text, is thus defined: "Purta actions consist in the sinking of wells, the excavation of reservoirs and tanks, the erection of temples, the establishment of free kitchens, and the planting of flowering and fruit-bearing trees."

**DUTIES ETC:** People desirous of the fruit of action in heaven, after death, engage in sacrifices and pious works. The result of such actions is impermanent. Sacrifices and pious works can also be executed as obligatory (nitya) action without seeking any result.

**WIN:** That is to say, they go to the lunar world.

**WORLD OF THE MOON:** This is a part of Prajāpati, who manifests Himself as both the sun and the moon.

**RETURN ETC:** Because what is gained as the result of an action is lost when the momentum of the action is exhausted. The Plane of the Moon is impermanent. (See B. G. IX. 21.)



**RISHIS:** Refers here to pious householders.

**WHO DESIRE ETC:** That is to say, who are still attached to the world and not ready for Liberation.

The Southern Path and the Northern Path have been elaborated in *Br. Up.* VI. ii. 15-16; *Chh. Up.* V. 10; *B. G.* VIII. 24-26.

*Those who travel by the Northern Path do not return to earth.*

## 10

But those who seek the Self through austerity, chastity, faith, and knowledge travel by the Northern Path and win the Sun. The Sun, verily, is the support of all lives. He is immortal and fearless; He is the final goal. Thence they do not return. This path is blocked [for the ignorant]. Concerning it there is the following verse:

**THE SELF:** That is to say, *prāna*, or the Sun, which is the *Ātman*, or Self, of the universe.

**CHASTITY:** Special emphasis is laid on this discipline. *Brahmacharya*, or chastity of body and mind, is the very basis of the higher spiritual perceptions.

**KNOWLEDGE:** The seeker on this path meditates on the identity of his self and the Sun.

**SUN:** Like the moon, the Sun is an aspect of *Prajāpati*.

**FEARLESS:** Unlike the moon, the Sun does not wax and wane.

**FINAL GOAL:** For those who combine rituals with meditation and also those who follow the path of knowledge but fail to attain Liberation before death.

**DO NOT RETURN:** Compare *B. G.* VIII. 24; *Br. Up.* VI. ii. 15.

**IS BLOCKED ETC:** The Sanskrit word *nirodha*, in the text, may be explained in a different way. According to the commentator Śankarānanda, it means the end, that is to say, the end of the transmigratory process. Those who, after death, attain the Sun do not return to earth. They are absorbed there in contemplation of Brahman and at the end of the cycle merge in the Supreme Brahman and achieve final Liberation.

*Descriptions of the Sun by those who have the special knowledge of the year, or time:*

## 11

Some call Him the father with five feet and with twelve forms, the giver of rain, and the dweller in the region above the sky. Others,

again, say that the world is fixed in the omniscient Sun, endowed with seven wheels and six spokes.

**FATHER:** That is to say, the father of the universe.

**FIVE FEET:** Refers to the six seasons: summer, the rainy season, autumn (śarat), fall (hemanta), winter, and spring—fall and winter being here counted as one. As a man walks by the help of his feet, so the sun, by means of the seasons, moves along its orbit.

**TWELVE FORMS:** The twelve months of the year.

**GIVER OF RAIN:** Compare *Ai. Up. I. i. 2.*

**SKY:** The intermediate region between earth and heaven.

**SEVEN WHEELS:** Seven rays or colours. They are described by the Vedic seers as the seven horses of the sun's chariot.

**SIX SPOKES:** The six seasons.

The difference between the two descriptions is secondary. The gist of the text is that Prajāpati, manifesting Himself as the sun and moon, next as time or the year, further manifests Himself as the universe. The verse occurs in *Ri. I. clxiv. 12.*

*The whole universe rests in Prajāpati, who manifests Himself as the year and who further evolves as the month. Therefore the moon, or food (rayi), and the sun, or the eater (prāna), are the component parts of the month, as they are of the year.*

## 12

The month, verily, is Prajāpati. Its dark half, verily, is food, rayi; its bright half, the eater, prāna. Therefore some rishis perform sacrifice in the bright half, some in the other half.

**MONTH:** Characterized by the dark and bright fortnights of the moon.

**SOME RISHIS:** Those who see everything to be pervaded by prāna.

**SOME . . . OTHER HALF:** Refers to those who do not see prāna as the cause of everything.

Though prāna is associated with the bright fortnight of the moon, yet to the rishis of superior wisdom, prāna pervades the entire month. They see everything to be bright; to them the dark fortnight of the moon is also bright. Therefore even when they perform a sacrifice in the dark fortnight, they reap the fruit as if it were performed in the bright. On the other hand, the rishis of inferior wisdom do not see prāna in everything; even though performing sacrifice in the bright fortnight, they do not reap the correspond-

ing result. Because of ignorance they see in the whole month only the dark fortnight of the moon. The purpose of this verse is to eulogize the knowledge of prāna as pervading the entire month. The month is a symbol of time.

*Prajāpati further manifests Himself as day and night, of which the eater, prāna, and the food, rayi, are component parts.*

## 13

Day and night, verily, are Prajāpati. Of these, day is the eater, prāna, and night, the food, rayi. Those who join in sexual enjoyment by day verily dissipate life; but to join in sexual enjoyment by night is, verily, chastity.

BY NIGHT: Also signifies the proper period.

CHASTITY: This kind of self-control, or brahmacharya, is prescribed for the householder.

*The question asked by the pupil was: "Sir, whence are these creatures born?" All that has been stated above does not give the direct answer. Now it is given:*

## 14

Food, verily, is Prajāpati. From that comes semen; from semen are all these creatures born.

FROM THAT ETC: Food, when assimilated, produces semen.

In answer to the question regarding the origin of created beings, the biological explanation of life is given in the present verse. Before that the teacher discusses cosmology, eschatology, etc. He seems to indicate that life has not been created from matter, but is implicit in it. Prajāpati, the Creator, is the Cosmic Mind. He is the manifestation, through māyā, of Brahman, or Absolute Life and Consciousness. He projects the universe out of Himself through intense contemplation. His first projection consists of a pair: food, or rayi, and the eater, or prāna. He is the inmost soul of both. He then further evolves as the year, or time, and its subdivisions of month and day. Lastly He evolves as edible food and seed; from the latter are directly born the created beings. Therefore life is present in all stages of creation, though its tangible manifestation is seen in living creatures. The description of the Northern Path and the Southern Path, by which the departed soul may travel, hints that the present life is not the first life of the embodied soul.

Life is without beginning; so, too, is the embodied soul. Existing from a beginningless past, the soul is born again and again, travels through one cycle after another, and obtains Liberation only through knowledge of its identity with Brahman.

*The fruit of a well disciplined life:*

15

Those, therefore, who practise this rule of Prajāpati beget a pair. But Brahmaloка belongs to those who observe austerity and chastity and in whom truth is firmly established.

THOSE: Referring to householders.

RULE OF PRAJĀPATI: As laid down in verse 13, referring to sexual intercourse at night and in the proper period.

PAIR: That is to say, a son and a daughter.

BRAHMALOKA: The word here means Chandraloka, or the Plane of the Moon, reached by the Southern Path (see note, p. 158). The moon is also a manifestation of Brahmā, or Prajāpati.

WHO OBSERVE ETC: Referring to those who engage in various pious works known as ishta (see note, p. 158), purta (see note, p. 158), and datta. The action called datta includes assurance of protection to those seeking help, non-violence to living beings, and charity.

CHASTITY: Brahmacharya. (See verse 13.)

Those who observe merely the rule of chastity given in verse 13 obtain on earth the tangible fruit of a son and a daughter. But those who perform also the prescribed sacrifices and engage in various pious works receive an additional intangible result: after death they follow the Southern Path and lead a happy life in Chandraloka, or the Plane of the Moon, whence, after the exhaustion of their merit, they return to earth.

*The way to the attainment of Brahmaloка:*

16

The stainless World of Brahmā belongs to those in whom there is no crookedness, no falsehood, no deception.

STAINLESS ETC: The World of Brahmā is not characterized by waxing and waning, as is the Plane of the Moon. Here the whole atmosphere is charged with spiritual qualities. Brahmaloка may be likened to the highest heaven of the dualistic religions. (See verse 10.)

**THOSE:** Refers to those brahmachārins who do not enter the householder's life at all, and the vānaprasthins, belonging to the third stage of life (see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 4-5), and also those mendicants who are not able to attain the Knowledge of Brahman while on earth.

**CROOKEDNESS:** Inevitable for ordinary householders due to conflicting modes of conduct.

**FALSEHOOD:** Often practised while one is engaged in sport or games.

**DECEPTION:** Discrepancy between a man's action and his professed way of living.

Unless a man of the world is extremely alert he cannot avoid crookedness, falsehood, and deception.

*Here ends the First Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*

## QUESTION II

THEN Vaidarbhi, belonging to the family of Bhrigu, asked him: Sir, how many gods support the body of the created being? How many of these manifest their power through it? And, which one, furthermore, is paramount?

**Gods:** That is to say, faculties. The Sanskrit word *deva* means "that which illumines or reveals." The tangible, physical organ of perception or of action is made of matter and hence is inert. By itself it cannot function. But each organ is controlled by a deity, that is to say, an aspect of Consciousness.

**BODY ETC:** The Sanskrit word *prajā*, in the text, does not mean Ātman, or Soul, but body. It is Ātman that supports prāna, which in turn supports the body. Prāna is not the support of Ātman.

**OF THESE:** The organs of perception and action.

**THROUGH IT:** Through the body.

It has been stated in the first chapter that prāna, or life, is both Prajāpati and the eater. The same prāna, as will be elucidated in the present chapter, is also the eater and Prajāpati (the Lord) in the individual body. (See *Chh. Up. IV. iii. 7.*) The Northern Path and the Southern Path, by which departed souls travel, and the process of rebirth have been described in the previous chapter in order to stimulate in the aspirant the attitude of dispassion for saṁsāra, the phenomenal universe. But a mere attitude is not enough for Self-Knowledge. The aspirant needs one-pointedness of mind, which is created by meditation (*upāsana*). The second chapter deals with meditation on prāna.

*Pippalāda, the teacher, answers:*

2

To the disciple he said: Space, ākāśa, verily is that god—the wind, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, eye, and ear, as well. These, having

manifested their glory, said boastfully: "We [each of us] support this body and uphold it."

**SPACE . . . EARTH:** These terms refer to the five great elements, which are the materials of the physical body.

**THAT GOD:** Consciousness permeates matter; all elements and organs are controlled by a portion of Consciousness called a god, or deva.

**SPEECH:** Includes all the organs of action.

**EYE, AND EAR:** These include all the organs of perception. The body is the effect, and the organ, the cause. The gross is the effect, and the subtle, the cause.

**THESE:** The organs, namely, speech, mind, eye, and ear.

**SUPPORT:** Like the pillars supporting a building.

**BODY:** Which is an aggregate of cause and effect.

*The powers by which the elements and the organs uphold the body are not their own, but the expression of prāna, or the life energy, functioning through them. This prāna is the same as Prajāpati, the cosmic life or creative energy. The same energy manifests itself through both microcosm and macrocosm. This fact is stated in the two following verses:*

## 3

To them prāna, the chiefmost said: "Do not fall into delusion. I alone, dividing myself into five parts, support this body and uphold it." But they were incredulous.

**PRĀNA:** The word denotes both the life force and the totality of the organs.

**FIVE PARTS:** Prāna, though one, is known by five names according to its different functions: prāna, apāna, vyāna, udāna, and samāna. (See Self-Knowledge, p. 131; also Pr. Up. III.)

*The superiority of prāna is shown:*

## 4

Prāna, out of pride, rose upward, as it were, from the body. Now, when it rose upward all the others rose upward also, and when it settled down they all settled down with it. As bees go out when their queen goes out and return when she returns, even so did speech, mind, eye, and ear. They, being satisfied, praised prāna.



AS IT WERE: Prāna only made a gesture of leaving the body.

IT ROSE: That is to say, by itself.

The organs were humbled; they realized prāna's superiority and began to praise it.

*How is prāna praised?*

## 5

It burns as fire, it is the sun, it is the rain; it is Indra, it is the wind, it is the earth, it is food. It is the luminous god. It is being and non-being; it is immortality.

INDRA: The destroyer of the demons and monsters, and the protector of the gods.

BEING: That is to say, the gross elements.

NON-BEING: The subtle elements.

IMMORTALITY: Refers to the heavenly nectar by which the gods are nourished.

## 6

As spokes in the hub of a wheel, all are fixed in prāna, including the Rīg-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the kshatriyas, and the brāhmins.

ALL: See VI. 4.

KSHATRIYAS: Refers to the second or warrior caste in Hindu society.

BRĀHMINS: The first or priestly caste, whose duty is to conduct sacrifices and perform other ritualistic works.

In ancient Hindu society the brāhmins were the custodians of sacrifices and worship, and the kshatriyas, the protectors of the brāhmins and the other castes. The close co-operation of the brāhmins and kshatriyas protected Hindu culture.

## 7

As Prajāpati thou movest about in the womb; it is thou, indeed, who art born again. To thee, O Prāna, creatures bring offerings, to thee who dwellest in the body with the organs.

THOU, INDEED, ETC: The father and mother are reborn as the son.

TO THEE, ETC: Prāna, dwelling in the body, is like a king, and the

sense-organs are like his subjects. The impressions gathered by the senses are the tributes they offer to prāna.

Prāna is the same as Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures, who pervades all objects. Therefore prāna, too, is present in everything. Prāna is the father and the mother; again, it is born as the son. The impressions of objects gathered by the senses do not serve their own ends; they are all gathered for prāna.

## 8

Thou art the chief bearer of oblations to the gods and the first offering to the departed fathers; thou art the true activities of the rishis, of the Atharvāngiras.

BEARER: When, in a sacrifice, oblations are offered to the gods, Fire, Agni, carries them to the recipients. The Sanskrit word *bahni*, in the text, meaning fire, is derived from the root *baha* which means "to carry."

FIRST OFFERING: At the beginning of a sacrifice the first offering is made to the departed fathers. It is performed while uttering the word *svadhā*. Therefore this word has here been translated as "first offering." It is prāna that carries the offering to the fathers.

TRUE ACTIVITIES: By which the body is upheld.

RISHIS: Refers to the sense-organs, including the prānas. The sense-organs are often called prānas in the Upanishads.

## 9

Indra thou art, O Prāna, and Rudra, too, in prowess. Thou art the Protector. Thou movest in the sky; thou art the sun, the lord of lights.

INDRA: The word here means the Supreme Lord.

RUDRA: The Destroyer of the universe.

PROTECTOR: The benign Protector of the world, known as Vishnu.

MOVEST: Through the endless process of the rising and setting of the sun.

LIGHTS: Luminous orbs such as the stars and planets.

## 10

When, O Prāna, thou showerest down rain, these creatures of thine are delighted, thinking there will be as much food as they desire.

## 11

Thou art vrātya, O Prāna, and the Ekarshi Fire that devours the butter. Thou art the Supreme Lord of all. We are the givers of the butter that thou consumest, O Mātariśva! Thou art our father.

VRĀTYA: Refers to persons, from any of the three higher castes, for whom the samskāras, or sacramental initiatory rites, have not been performed. They are unclean sinners, devoid of dharma. Since prāna was the first born, there was no one to perform the rites for it. Therefore it is called vrātya. But prāna is pure by nature and needs no sacramental rites in order to purify itself. In Sanskrit rhetoric such an expression is called byangastuti, that is to say, praise through the pointing out of a blemish.

EKARSHI FIRE: A well-known sacrificial fire of the followers of the Atharva-Veda.

BUTTER: Which is used with the oblations in a sacrifice.

THOU ART THE SUPREME ETC: According to another reading, the meaning of the sentence is: "Thou art the Lord of all existing things."

O MĀTARIŚVA ETC: According to another reading, the sentence means: "Thou art the father of Mātariśvan, the wind, and therefore of the whole world."

## 12

That form of thine which abides in speech, which abides in the ear, which abides in the eye, and which pervades the mind, make propitious. Go not away!

Of the different forms of prāna, it is apāna that controls the organ of speech; vyāna, of hearing; prāna (breath), of seeing; and samāna, of thinking. If prāna leaves the body none of these forms functions and the organs become inactive.

*The eulogy of prāna is concluded:*

## 13

All that exists here is under the control of prāna, and also what exists in heaven. Protect us as a mother her sons; bestow upon us prosperity and wisdom.

ALL THAT ETC: Everything that one enjoys on earth.

WHAT EXISTS ETC: What is enjoyed by the gods.

WISDOM: Prosperity is maintained only through wisdom.

It is Prajāpati, or the Creator, who manifests Himself as the macrocosmic and microcosmic prāna. The creative energy is one, but is known differently through its different functions.

*Here ends the Second Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*

## QUESTION III

THEN Kausalya, the son of Aśvala, asked Pippalāda: Sir, whence is this prāna born? How does it come into this body? How does it abide in the body after it has divided itself? How does it depart? How does it support the external and how the internal?

**PRĀNA:** The word here denotes the vital breath which sustains the body. This prāna is a manifestation of the cosmic prāna, or Prajāpati.

**WHENCE ETC:** Prāna, or the vital breath, consists of parts. Anything of such nature is an effect, produced by a combination of parts. Hence prāna is an effect. It is therefore proper to ask its cause.

**DEPART:** That is to say, from the body at the time of death.

**EXTERNAL:** Refers to the created beings (adhibhuta) and the gods (adhidaiva).

**INTERNAL:** The body, senses, and mind (adhyātma).

The foregoing chapter has described prāna as Prajāpati and the eater. Now will be described its origin and next how prāna is to be worshipped.

### 2

To him the teacher replied: You are asking difficult questions; you must be exceedingly devoted to Brahman. Therefore I will answer you.

**DIFFICULT:** The nature of prāna is hard to know.

**BRAHMAN:** Refers to the Supreme Brahman as opposed to the Lower Brahman. (See *Mu. Up.* III. i. 4.)

*The first and second questions are answered:*

### 3

This prāna is born of Ātman. As a shadow is cast by a person, so this prāna is, by Ātman. Through the activity of the mind it comes into this body.

**THIS PRĀNA ETC:** This answers the first question. (Compare *Mu. Up.* II. i. 3.)

**AS A SHADOW ETC:** How prāna is born of Ātman is described by an illustration. A shadow is cast by the body; it cannot exist independent of the body. Likewise, prāna is projected from Ātman; it is perceived to exist because of Ātman, which is its substratum. As the shadow is unsubstantial, so also is prāna.

**THROUGH THE ACTIVITY ETC:** This answers the second question.

**ACTIVITY OF THE MIND:** That is to say, through action arising from volition, desire, etc., which constitute the mind. Here the text refers to the doctrine of rebirth: A man's present life is the sure and appropriate result of his thoughts in a previous existence, even as a shadow is the similitude unavoidably cast by a person's body. (Compare *Pr. Up.* III. 7; *Br. Up.* IV. iv. 6; *Chh. Up.* III. xiv. 1.)

*The next three verses answer the third question:*

## 4

As an emperor commands his officials, saying: "Rule these villages or those," so this prāna employs the other prānas, each in its separate place.

**THIS PRĀNA:** Namely, the chief prāna, or the life force in the body.

**OTHER PRĀNAS:** The secondary prānas, or the sense-organs, which are modifications of the chief prāna.

**SEPARATE PLACE:** Such as the organs of hearing, seeing, etc.

*The division described:*

## 5

Prāna engages apāna in the organs of excretion and generation; he himself moves through the mouth and nose and dwells in the eye and ear. In the middle is samāna; it distributes equally what has been offered as food [in the fire in the stomach]. From this prāna fire arise the seven flames.

**ENGAGES ETC:** For the purpose of expelling unassimilated food and drink.

**SAMĀNA:** This modification of prāna is called samāna because it distributes equally (samam) through the body what has been taken as food and drink.

OFFERED: Eating is described as a sacrifice. Food is offered as an oblation in the fire that burns in the stomach, by which the food is digested. (Compare B. G. IV. 24.)

SEVEN FLAMES: Namely, the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, and the organ of speech. It is prāna that enables the seven organs to perform their respective functions: hearing, seeing, smelling, and speaking.

*Vyāna, another modification of prāna:*

## 6

The ātman dwells in the heart, where there are one hundred and one arteries (nāḍi); for each of these there are one hundred branches, and for each of these branches, again, there are seventy-two thousand subsidiary vessels. Vyāna moves in these.

THE ĀTMAN: Here the word refers to the individual self, conditioned by the body.

HEART: It resembles a lotus bud, inside which there is a space described as the dwelling-place of the ātman.

ONE HUNDRED AND ONE ETC: Compare *Chh. Up.* VIII. vi. 6.

VYĀNA: As the arteries and veins spread out through the body, so vyāna, moving through them, pervades the whole body. Its special manifestation is observed in the joints, shoulders, and vital parts. Vyāna remains active when prāna and apāna stop functioning. This is noticed especially when a man performs a deed requiring great strength, such as stringing a bow, at which time his breathing stops.

According to this verse there are in the human body 101 arteries. The smaller branches are 10,100 in number ( $101 \times 100$ ); the subsidiary vessels, 727,200,000 ( $10,100 \times 72,000$ ). If we add to these the principal arteries, there are 727,210,201 arteries and subsidiary vessels in the body. Perhaps, however, this ancient enumeration is intended to include the nervous system as well.

*The fourth question is answered by the description of udāna:*

## 7

And then udāna, ascending upward through one of them, conducts the departing soul to the virtuous world, for its virtuous deeds; to the sinful world, for its sinful deeds; and to the world of men, for both.



ASCENDING UPWARD: Udāna functions from the foot to the head. Through it, at the time of death, the vital breath goes out.

ONE OF THEM: Known as the sushumnā; it is one of the one hundred and one main arteries.

VIRTUOUS WORLD: The heavenly plane.

VIRTUOUS DEEDS: That is to say, when virtue predominates in a man's action.

SINFUL WORLD: The world of subhuman beings, popularly known as hell.

FOR BOTH: When virtue and vice are equally balanced.

Throughout the process of rebirth the real Soul of man remains unaffected. It is the embodied soul that reaps the fruit of action. After returning from the upper or the nether world, the soul is again born in a human body and continues its evolution.

*The two remaining questions are answered: Prāna and its modifications in the tangible physical body have their cosmic counterparts. The physical is controlled by the cosmic.*

## 8

The sun, verily, is the external prāna; for it rises, favouring the prāna in the eye. The deity that exists in the earth controls the apāna of man. The space, ākāśa, between heaven and earth is samāna. The air is vyāna.

FAVOURING THE PRĀNA ETC: Without the sun, the eye could not see.

THE DEITY ETC: That is to say, the deity that controls the earth. According to Vedānta, the sun, the earth, the sky, the air, fire, etc. are inert physical objects. But Consciousness (Brahman) pervades them all. The Consciousness conditioned by each is called the deity that is its controller.

CONTROLS THE APĀNA ETC: This, according to Śankarāchārya, explains why a heavy body stands erect without falling to the earth or going upward. Here is a reference to something like the force of gravity.

THE AIR ETC: The air pervades the world as vyāna pervades the body.

Prāna (Prajāpati), as the cosmic force, sustains the sun, the earth, ākāśa, and the air. The microcosmic counterpart of Prajāpati is the prāna, or vital breath, of the individual man. The sun, the earth, ākāśa, and the air are the cosmic counterparts of the eye, the body, samāna, and vyāna. Both the external and the internal are controlled by the chief prāna, or Prajāpati.

*Udāna and its cosmic counterpart, fire, are described:*

## 9

Fire, verily, is udāna; therefore he whose fire has been extinguished goes out for rebirth, with the senses absorbed in the mind.

**FIRE:** The word is used in a general sense. The sun, mentioned in the foregoing verse, is a special manifestation of fire.

**UDĀNA:** The soul goes out, at the time of death, with the help of udāna.

**WHOSE FIRE ETC:** Refers to the dying person.

**GOES OUT FOR ETC:** That is to say, dies. Death is followed by rebirth.

**WITH THE SENSES ETC:** At the time of death the sense-organs become united with the mind. The soul leaves the body along with the mind.

The principal prāna, or the cosmic energy, manifests itself as the sun, fire, ākāśa, the air, and heat and upholds the deities controlling these elements. Prāna, apāna, samāna, vyāna, and udāna are the internal manifestations of the principal prāna in the individual body. These five forms of prāna enable the physical organs to perform their functions. The principal prāna in this way supports both the external elements with their respective deities, and the internal organs with the life forces that control them.

*The thoughts and impressions of a lifetime manifest themselves as desires in the hour of death, and these, in turn, determine what will happen to the soul after death. The manner of a man's death is described:*

## 10

Whatever one's thinking [at the time of death], with that one enters into prāna. Prāna joined with fire, together with the soul, leads to whatever world has been fashioned by thought.

**THINKING:** Righteous or unrighteous.

**WITH THAT:** That is to say, with the thoughts and the organs.

**PRĀNA:** The principal prāna, manifested as the vital breath in the body.

**FIRE:** That is to say, udāna, which keeps the body warm.

**SOUL:** The embodied soul, which is the performer of action and the experiencer of the result.

**WHATEVER WORLD:** Higher or lower, depending upon one's virtuous or sinful deeds.

**THOUGHT:** It is explicit that the after-death experience of the soul depends entirely upon the desires it cherishes at the time of death. If it

has attained peace and freedom before death, it experiences them afterwards as well.

The manner of the soul's leaving the body has thus been described in *Chh. Up.* VI. viii. 6: "When a man departs from this earth, his speech merges in his mind, his mind in his breath, his breath in heat (fire), hear in the highest being." First the dying man's organ of speech stops functioning; he cannot utter a word. But his mind is still able to think and he can feel pleasure and pain. Next the mind ceases to function, but the prāna is active; there is movement in the body. Then the prāna does not act; the body only feels warm. At last the heat of the body merges in the soul, and the soul goes out of the body.

*The result of the knowledge of prāna both here and hereafter:*

## 11

The wise man who thus knows prāna does not lose his offspring and becomes immortal. As to this there is the following verse:

DOES NOT ETC: This is the tangible result enjoyed on earth.

IMMORTAL: What he enjoys is not ultimate Immortality, which is attained through Self-Knowledge, but a kind of relative immortality enjoyed through identity with prāna. This result is obtained by those who cultivate the knowledge of prāna with a selfish motive. But he who, without any motive, meditates on prāna attains one-pointedness of mind, followed by purity, and gradually obtains true Immortality.

*The following verse refers to the questions asked in verse one and answered in the verses that follow:*

## 12

He who knows the origin of prāna, its entry, its place, its fivefold distribution, its internal aspect and also its external, obtains immortality; yea, he obtains immortality.

ORIGIN: From the Supreme Self.

ENTRY: Into the physical body through the activity of the mind.

PLACE: In the different organs.

FIVEFOLD ETC: Refers to prāna's fivefold modifications and their respective functions.

INTERNAL ASPECT: That is to say, the control of the eye, ear, etc.

EXTERNAL: The control of the sun, ākāśa, etc.

YEA, ETC: The repetition marks the completion of the questions and their answers.

The following is adapted from the notes of Ānandagiri:

Prāna (the cosmic energy) is born of Ātman. It enters into a good or evil body through the activity of the mind. Then, modifying itself into five forms, it places apāna in the organs of excretion and generation; prāna (which is its own principal counterpart) in the eyes and ears; samāna in the navel; vyāna in the arteries and veins; and udāna in the sushumnā artery. It departs from the body through udāna. Prāna further manifests itself through the external forms (adhidaivata) of the sun, the earth, ākāśa, the air, and fire, and through them it controls the prāna, apāna, vyāna, samāna, and udāna respectively (in the individual body). The organs of the eyes, the tongue, the nose, the ears, the mind, and the skin are also manifestations of prāna; therefore it controls the material objects (adhibhuta) apprehended by them.

*Here ends the Third Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*

## QUESTION IV

**NEXT** Sauryāyani, belonging to the family of Garga, asked: Sir, what are they that sleep in man, and what are they that remain awake in him? Which deity is it that sees dreams? Whose is the happiness [of deep sleep]? In whom, again, are all these gathered together?

**ASKED:** All the questions asked in this chapter are related to the Supreme Brahman. A person engaged in sacrificial action with selfish motives is born again and again to reap its results. Gradually he develops dispassion for the enjoyments of the phenomenal universe, which is characterized by the causal law. Then through meditation on prāna he acquires one-pointedness and purity of mind, practises the fourfold spiritual discipline (discrimination between the Real and the unreal; renunciation of the unreal; the six virtues, such as control of the mind, control of the senses, and forbearance; and yearning after Liberation), and thus qualifies himself for the Knowledge of the Supreme Brahman. Such an aspirant is entitled to ask the questions in this verse.

**WHAT . . . SLEEP IN MAN:** Cessation of physical activities distinguishes sleep from waking. Therefore the activities of the waking state can be attributed to the body and the senses and not to Ātman, or the Self. Without discrimination between the body and the Self, the Knowledge of the Self is not possible. The answer to the first question is given in IV. 2.

**WHAT ARE . . . AWAKE IN HIM:** Who preserves the body during waking, dreaming, and deep sleep? The answer to the second question is given in IV. 3-4. Prāna is the protector of the body. The preservation of the body is attributed to prāna and not to Ātman.

**WHICH DEITY . . . DREAMS:** Who sees the dreams? Is it the body, or is it the senses? The answer to the third question is given in IV. 5. It will be seen that dreams are attributed to the mind.

**WHOSE IS ETC:** Refers to the state of dreamless sleep, characterized by bliss which is not the result of the mind's contact with any object, and also by an absence of pain. The universal expression of a man awakened from deep sleep is: "I slept happily." Who is the experiencer of this bliss? The answer to the fourth question is given in IV. 6. The experience of this

bliss is attributed to the undifferentiated cosmic ignorance, by which Ātman remains covered at the time of deep sleep.

**IN WHOM . . . TOGETHER:** Who is it that is free from the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, and is also man's final goal? The answer to the fifth question is given in IV. 7-9. It is the imperishable Ātman, known as Turiya.

**GATHERED TOGETHER:** All the experiences of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep blend indistinguishably in the imperishable Ātman, as honeys collected from different flowers blend in the honey found in a bee-hive, or as rivers blend in the ocean. They are realized to be non-different from Ātman and disappear in It.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

All that belongs to saṃsāra, or the phenomenal universe, has been dealt with in the first three questions. This saṃsāra, unreal in nature, characterized by cause and effect, and subject to modifications, falls within the scope of the lower knowledge, aparā vidyā. The next three questions deal with the Puruṣa, the Supreme Person, which is unborn and is both inside and outside of everything. Transcending cause and effect, devoid of prāṇa, unknown to the mind, unperceived by the senses, other than an object, all good, tranquil, free from modifications, imperishable, and true, the Puruṣa is attainable by the Higher Knowledge, the Parā Vidyā. The *Mundaka Upanishad* (II. i. 1.) states: "As, from a blazing fire, sparks essentially akin to it fly forth by the thousand, so also, my good friend, various beings come forth from the imperishable Brahman and unto Him again return." Who are these various beings that come forth, like sparks, from the imperishable Brahman? How, again, do they return to Him? What is the nature of the imperishable Brahman? In order to explain all this the foregoing questions are raised.

*The answer to the first question is given by means of the illustration of the sun and its rays, in order to explain that in the dream state the body and the organs other than the mind and the prāṇa remain asleep and do not function:*

## 2

To him Pippalāda replied: O Gārgya, as the rays of the sun, when it sets, are gathered in that luminous orb, and again go forth when it rises, even so, verily, all these—the objects and the senses—become one in the superior god, the mind. Therefore at that time a man hears not, sees not, smells not, tastes not, touches not, speaks not, grasps not,

enjoys not, emits not, and does not move about. He sleeps—that is what people say.

ARE GATHERED ETC: The rays cannot be distinguished from one another; they remain in an undifferentiated state.

BECOME ONE ETC: The senses give up their respective functions and are completely subdued by the mind.

SUPERIOR GOD: The word *deva*, meaning deity or god, is used to denote anything endowed with the power of expression or illumination. Therefore the Upanishads often describe the mind and the senses as *devas*. The mind is called a superior god because it is higher than the senses, which are under its control.

It may be contended that in dreams, also, one notices the activities of the eye, the ear, etc. But these activities are modifications of the mind alone and are not related to any objects of the external world. While asleep, one does not really see external forms or hear external sounds.

*It is the prānas that always remain active in a man and preserve his body during the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Even when the senses remain inactive in sleep, the prānas, compared here to the sacrificial fires, keep watch.*

## 3

The *prāna* fires remain awake in this city. *Apāna* is the *Gārhapatya* Fire, and *vyāna*, the *Anvahāryapachana* Fire. And *prāna* is the *Āhavanīya* Fire, so called from *being taken*—since it is taken from the *Gārhapatya* Fire.

CRRY: That is to say, the body. As a city has gates, the body likewise has gates, eleven in number. They are the two eyes, the two nostrils, the two ears, the mouth, the navel, the aperture at the top of the head, the organ of excretion, and the organ of generation. (Compare *Ka. Up. II. ii. 1.*)

Lifelong performance of the *Agnihotra* sacrifice was enjoined upon householders belonging to the three upper castes. Three fires were necessary for this sacrifice: The *Gārhapatya* Fire, the *Āhavanīya* Fire, and the *Anvahāryapachana* Fire, commonly called the *Dakshina* or Southern Fire. The *Gārhapatya* or Householder's Fire was never allowed to go out; it had to be fed by the offering of daily oblations. At the time of the *Agnihotra* sacrifice, fires were taken from the *Gārhapatya* Fire, and the *Āhavanīya* and the Southern Fires were lighted. The *Āhavanīya* Fire, placed to the east, was



used for offering oblations to the gods. The Anvahāryapachana or Southern Fire, placed in the south, was used for offering oblations to the departed ancestors. In the Āhavaniya Fire two oblations were offered every morning and evening, as mentioned in the next verse. In this manner the Hindus communed, in olden times, with the gods and the souls of their ancestors.

These external fires and oblations have their counterparts in a man himself. The sacrifices can also be made mentally, through meditation. Meditation, called upāsānā, brings a more meritorious result than physical sacrifices. In the text the various prānas are identified with the various fires. Vyāna is identified with the Southern Fire because it issues from the heart through an artery on the right (dakshina) side. Apāna, functioning in the lower part of the body, remains always active and hence is compared to the Gārhapatya Fire, which is never allowed to go out. The prāna of a sleeping person issues from the apāna and functions through his mouth and nostrils. Because it is taken from apāna, prāna is compared to the Āhavaniya Fire, which is also taken from the Gārhapatya Fire. Even when all the other senses remain inactive in sleep, the different prānas keep watch over the body. Therefore they are compared to the sacrificial fires.

*Samāna is the hotā, the priest; the mind, the sacrificer; and udāna, the desired result of the sacrifice.*

## 4

Samāna is so called because it distributes *equally* the two oblations, namely, the out-breathing and the in-breathing; it is the priest. The mind, verily, is the sacrificer. Udāna is the fruit of the sacrifice, because it leads the sacrificer every day, in deep sleep, to Brahman.

**SAMĀNA ETC:** The priest carries the two oblations and distributes them *equally* into the Āhavaniya Fire; samāna, likewise, equally distributes the two breaths, inhalation and exhalation, for the protection of the body. The number of oblations, namely, two, is the same as that of the breaths. One who is endowed with this knowledge about the prānas performs the Agnihotra sacrifice always, even in sleep. Its performance is laid down in the Vedas as the duty of a householder. The Yajur-Veda states: "Even in sleep the prāna fires function."

**PRIEST:** Like the priest, samāna carries and equally distributes the out-breathing and the in-breathing.

**THE MIND ETC:** In the Agnihotra sacrifice, the sacrificer is an important person. He performs the sacrifice desiring heaven as his reward. The mind, also, is an important organ. It offers the senses and the objects as oblations

into the ever wakeful prāna fires and longs to experience the Bliss of Brahman in dreamless sleep.

UDĀNA ETC: At the time of death the sacrificer leaves the body through udāna and reaps the fruit of the sacrifice in heaven. The same udāna leads the mind (the sacrificer) away from the dream state to dreamless sleep and enables it to attain the imperishable Brahman. Therefore udāna is called the fruit of the sacrifice.

BECAUSE IT ETC: Ordinarily there are three states of consciousness: (1) the waking state, during which one is conscious of the physical world outside; (2) the dream state, when one is conscious of the inner world and of objects created from the impressions of the waking state; (3) the state of dreamless sleep, when consciousness is free from the duality of subject and object and one experiences a feeling of undifferentiated awareness. Vedānta speaks of Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, which permeates the three states and is immortal and undifferentiated. Turiya is Brahman. Often the Upanishads compare the Consciousness of Brahman to the consciousness experienced in deep sleep. Both are characterized by an absence of pain and of the subject-object relationship. But the state of dreamless sleep, which is mechanically attained, is impermanent, and the consciousness experienced during it is covered by a thin layer of ignorance. Hence an ordinary person, after waking from deep sleep, leads the normal life of ignorance. But the knower of Brahman never forgets his real nature at any time. Though all persons attain the bliss of oneness in dreamless sleep, yet only the knower of Brahman realizes it as the Bliss of Brahman.

In deep sleep the illumined person experiences the Knowledge of Brahman. For the ignorant, deep sleep bears no such fruit. The three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are common to both. In the ignorant person, as in the illumined, the sense-organs do not function in deep sleep, the prāna fires keep watch, and the mind, free from the conditions of waking and dreaming, remains inactive. Therefore the purpose of this verse is to eulogize the Knowledge of Brahman.

*The question "Which deity is it that sees dreams?" is answered: It is the mind, with the senses gathered into it, that experiences dreams, and not Ātman. Dreaming is characteristic of the mind and not of the Self.*

There, in dreams, that god, the mind, experiences glory. Whatever has been seen he sees again; whatever has been heard he hears again;

whatever has been experienced in different countries and quarters, he experiences again. Whatever has been seen or not seen, heard or not heard, and whatever is real or not real—he sees it all. He sees all, himself being all.

**THERE, IN DREAMS:** When the sense-organs are gathered into the mind and the prāṇas keep watch for the protection of the body.

**THAT GOD, THE MIND:** That is to say, the Self conditioned by the upādhi, or limitation, of the mind. The real Self, one with Brahman, does not experience waking or dreaming. These are superimposed upon It, through avidyā, on account of Its association with the mind. It is said in *Br. Up.* IV. iii. 7. that the Self, conditioned by the mind and becoming a dream, seems to think and seems to move. This association with the mind does not impair the Self's inherent luminosity. The apparent luminosity of the phenomenal self, attributed to it till the attainment of the knowledge of its oneness with Brahman, is due to its association with the mind. For instance, only in the sphere of duality, when the self comes in contact with objects, does one see another. (Duality is the result of ignorance.) But when all becomes Ātman alone, "then what can one see and by what means will one see it?" (*Br. Up.* IV. v. 15.) Therefore though the mind is responsible for dream perceptions, this does not affect the true self-luminosity of Ātman.

**GLORY:** The dream forms, characterized by the subject-object relationship, are many and varied.

**WHATEVER HAS BEEN ETC:** An object experienced in the waking state leaves its impression on the mind. When the same object is dreamt of, it is only the mental impression that appears as the object. Thus a man sees a friend in the waking state. The impression of the friend is imbedded in the mind. The same impression reappears in the dream, and the dreamer ignorantly thinks he is truly seeing his friend.

**NOT SEEN:** That is to say, not seen in this life, but in a previous one.

**REAL:** Actual water, for instance.

**NOT REAL:** A mirage.

**BEING ALL:** Being conditioned by the impressions of the objects seen before.

The dreams are the impressions of waking experiences obtained, it may be, at different times; but they are sometimes curiously and fantastically jumbled together owing to the absence of the controlling power of reason and will in sleep.

*Dreamless sleep is described in order to answer the question "Whose is the happiness?"*

## 6

When the jiva is overcome by light he sees no dreams; at that time, in this body, arises this happiness.

WHEN ETC: Refers to the state of dreamless sleep.

JIVA: The embodied soul, conditioned by the upādhi of the mind.

LIGHT: The light of Brahman.

HE SEES ETC: In dreamless sleep.

THIS HAPPINESS: The happiness experienced in dreamless sleep is not associated with the subject-object relationship. It is the Bliss of Brahman that manifests itself through the ānandamayakośa, or sheath of bliss. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 93-94; *Self-Knowledge*, p. 85.)

The impressions created in the mind during the waking state are reawakened in sleep on account of latent desires. This is how one sees dreams. In deep sleep the desires are overpowered by the light of Brahman dwelling in the heart. In the absence of stimulation the impressions cannot remanifest themselves. The mind and the sense-organs are withdrawn into the heart. There is no longer any knowledge of contrasted objects. The mind in its undifferentiated state pervades the body. A man in deep sleep feels only bliss. This is expressed, when he has awakened, by the statement "I slept happily."

*In deep sleep the body and the senses, functioning under the influence of avidyā and the desires resulting from it, remain actionless. With their becoming stilled, Ātman—which, during waking and dreaming appeared in different forms on account of Its association with the upādhis of the body and the mind—manifests Peace, Non-duality, and Bliss, which are Its true nature. In this state all the gross and subtle elements of matter are absorbed into Ātman. All this is explained by the following illustration:*

## 7-8

As a bird goes to a tree to roost, even so, O friend, all this rests in the Supreme Ātman:

Earth and its subtle counterpart, water and its subtle counterpart, fire and its subtle counterpart, air and its subtle counterpart, ākāśa and its subtle counterpart, the eye and what can be seen, the ear and what can be heard, the nose and what can be smelt, the taste (tongue) and what can be tasted, the skin and what can be touched, the organ

of speech and what can be spoken, the hands and what can be grasped, the organ of generation and what can be enjoyed, the organ of excretion and what can be excreted, the feet and what is their destination, the mind (*manas*) and what can be thought, the intellect (*buddhi*) and what can be comprehended, the ego (*aḥamkāra*) and the object of egoism, the memory (*chitta*) and its object, knowledge (*tejah*) and its object, *prāṇa* and what is to be supported.

**EARTH . . . ĀKĀŚA AND ITS SUBTLE COUNTERPART:** These refer to the gross and the subtle elements. According to Vedānta, from Ātman, under the influence of *avidyā*, evolve the five subtle elements—*ākāśa*, air, etc.—each with its unique attribute. Then, by their mutual combination, the gross elements are produced. (See *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 68-69, 74-75.)

**WHAT CAN BE SEEN ETC:** The objects of perception.

**THE MIND ETC:** The inner organ (*antahkarana*), by which pain, pleasure, etc. are experienced, is divided into four parts according to its functions. The mind, or *manas*, is that function of the inner organ which considers the pros and cons of a situation. The *buddhi*, the intellect or determinative faculty, resolves doubt and comes to a conclusion regarding the true nature of an object. I-consciousness, or *aḥamkāra*, identifies the Self with the body and gives rise to the feelings of "I-ness" and "my-ness." The *chitta*, the storehouse of past impressions, is responsible for memory. According to some Vedāntists, it is the function of the *chitta* to seek pleasurable objects.

**KNOWLEDGE ETC:** This explanation is given from the notes of Śaṅkarāṇanda. According to Śaṅkarācārya, the word *tejah*, in the text, means a kind of luminous skin, different from the organ of touch.

**PRĀṆA:** Also known as *Hiranyagarbha* or *Sutrātmā* (the Cosmic Thread), which supports tangible objects, endowed with names and forms and characterized by the causal relation.

In deep sleep the subtle and gross elements, the sense-organs and their objects, and the mind and its various parts all remain inactive and are absorbed in Ātman. At that time the *jīva*, or embodied soul, dwells in the causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*), which is covered by the veiling-power of *māyā* but unaffected by its projecting-power. Thus in deep sleep the *jīva* approaches nearest to Ātman and experiences Its glory.

*The true nature of the self:*

9

He, verily, it is who sees, feels, hears, smells, tastes, thinks, and knows. He is the doer, the intelligent self, the *puruṣa*. He is established in the Highest, the imperishable Ātman.

**KNOWS:** Refers to the function of the buddhi, or determinative faculty.

**INTELLIGENT SELF:** The agent of knowing.

**ESTABLISHED ETC:** That is to say, the embodied soul realizes his oneness with the Supreme Ātman when māyā is destroyed.

The Supreme Ātman, or Pure Consciousness, appears through avidyā to be conditioned by upādhis and becomes the jiva, or embodied soul. It is the jiva which, owing to its association with various upādhis of the mind, senses, etc., becomes the seer, feeler, hearer, etc. The jiva may be compared to the image of the sun reflected in the water in a dish: the reflection appears to move or to remain still according to the condition of the water. When the water and the dish are removed the reflection is absorbed into the real sun. Likewise, with the elimination of māyā, which reflects the various forms of the jiva, the reflected soul enters the Supreme Ātman, which is its real Self.

*The fruit of the knowledge of identity:*

10

He who knows that imperishable Being, bright, without shadow, without body, without colour, verily attains the Supreme, the undecaying Purusha. O my good friend, he who knows Ātman becomes all-knowing, becomes all. About it there is the following verse:

**HE:** Free from all desires.

**WHO KNOWS ETC:** That is to say, who knows the identity of the transcendental Ātman and the Supreme Brahman.

**BRIGHT:** Because It is devoid of all attributes.

**WITHOUT SHADOW:** Free from tamas, or ignorance.

**WITHOUT BODY:** Free from all upādhis of name and form.

**WITHOUT COLOUR:** Free from all characteristics.

**HE WHO KNOWS ĀTMAN:** Refers to the illumined person, who has renounced all impermanent objects.

**ALL-KNOWING:** By knowing the non-dual Ātman one knows all.

Ātman is always omniscient; but through ignorance It believes that It knows but little. When that ignorance is destroyed through Vidyā, It rediscovers Its omniscience.

11

He, O friend, who knows that imperishable Being wherein rests the intelligent self, together with the gods, the prānas, and the elements—he becomes all-knowing and enters into all.

INTELLIGENT SELF: The embodied soul.

GODS: Such as Indra, Agni (the god of fire), etc., who control the different sense-organs.

ELEMENTS: Earth, water, fire, air, and ākāśa.

*Here ends the Fourth Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*



## QUESTION V

THEN Satyakāma, the son of Śibi, asked Pippalāda: Sir, if among men someone should here meditate on the syllable AUM until death, which world, verily, would he win thereby?

**MEDITATE:** Meditation means the continuous flow of the mind toward Ātman through the total exclusion of all ideas foreign to It. In meditation the mind becomes steady, like the flame of a candle set in a windless place. The principal disciplines for meditation, as laid down by Patanjali in *Yog. Sū. II. 30-32.*, are yama and niyama. Yama includes non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity of body and mind, and non-receiving of gifts. Niyama includes outer and inner purity, contentment, austerity, study of scripture, and devotion to God. The aspirant should meditate on AUM with great love, regarding it as the symbol of Brahman.

**AUM:** Generally written OM.

**UNTIL DEATH:** The meditation should be practised as a life-long vow.

**WHICH WORLD:** Many are the worlds that spiritual seekers may attain after death.

AUM is the symbol of both the Lower Brahman and the Higher Brahman. Brahman may be worshipped by the aspirant in both aspects. From the Lower Brahman he can attain the Higher Brahman by gradual stages.

*The teacher, Pippalāda, mentions AUM as the symbol of both the Lower Brahman and the Higher Brahman:*

### 2

He replied: O Satyakāma, the syllable AUM is the Supreme Brahman and also the other Brahman. Therefore he who knows it attains, with its support, the one or the other.

**SUPREME:** Parabrahman, or the Supreme Brahman, also called the Higher Brahman, is devoid of all characteristics and cannot be known through words or thought.

OTHER: Aparabrahman, or the other Brahman, also called the Lower Brahman, is the first manifestation of the Absolute, or Pure Consciousness, in māyā. It is designated by such epithets as Hiranyagarbha and prāna.

Brahman, being transcendental in nature, cannot be directly comprehended by the mind. Therefore many indirect meditations on Brahman are laid down in the scriptures. One such is meditation through a symbol, or pratika, which means meditation on one aspect of an all-pervading entity, or on something associated with it, as the thing itself. Thus the omnipresent Deity, Vishnu, may be worshipped through the stone symbol called śalagrāma or through His name. AUM is the most immediate symbol of Brahman. It is much more effective than any other symbol. (Compare *Ka. Up.* I. ii. 15-17; *Yog. Su.* I. 27.) It must be emphasized that Brahman should not be contemplated as the symbol, but *through* the symbol. The former method brings Brahman down to the level of the symbol and may aptly be called idolatrous; but the latter transforms the symbol into Brahman and is a valid form of worship. By contemplating the Supreme Brahman through AUM, one realizes the highest plane, and by using AUM as a symbol of the Lower Brahman, one attains a lower plane.

*AUM consists of three mātṛās, or letters: A, U, and M. The aspirant should know the meaning of these letters and meditate on all of them. But if he is ignorant of the total meaning of AUM and meditates only on A, still he reaps a good fruit; no calamity befalls him. This only proves the greatness of AUM.*

## 3

If he meditates on one letter (mātṛā), then, being enlightened by that alone, he quickly comes back to earth after death. The rik verses lead him to the world of men. By practising austerity, chastity, and faith he enjoys greatness.

ONE LETTER: The letter A.

BEING ENLIGHTENED ETC: Though the aspirant does not contemplate AUM in its entirety, he is not completely deprived of a spiritual reward.

RIK VERSES: It is said in the Vedas that the letter A in the syllable AUM is the very soul of the Rig-Veda and of the earth. One who meditates on A realizes his identity with it and through it attains the earthly plane.

WORLD OF MEN: That is to say, the earth.

Among the many planes where a man can be born after death, the earth has a special significance, being the dwelling-place of human beings.

The earth is inhabited by innumerable living creatures. Among these, man occupies the highest position, because he alone is entitled to the Knowledge of Brahman. And lastly, among men, one endowed with faith, chastity, and austerity experiences the glories of the spiritual life.

*The fruit of contemplating U the second letter of AUM:*

4

If, again, he meditates on the second letter, he attains the mind and is led up by the yajur verses to the intermediate space, to the Plane of the Moon. Having enjoyed greatness in the Plane of the Moon, he returns hither again.

**MEDITATES:** Until he realizes his oneness with the object of meditation.

**MIND:** The mind is controlled by the deity who governs the moon. It is associated with dreams, since dreams are creations of the mind.

**YAJUR VERSES:** *U* is the symbol of the verses of the Yajur-Veda.

**PLANE OF THE MOON:** This plane, the Somaloka, is located in the space between heaven and earth.

**GREATNESS:** Various supernatural glories experienced by the dwellers in the Plane of the Moon.

**HITHER:** To the earth.

A man practising meditation should contemplate his identity with the object of meditation till that identity is realized. Dream experiences are projections of the mind. The after-death experiences in the Plane of the Moon are of the same nature as ideas and are therefore compared to dreams. The letter *U* is the symbol of the Yajur-Veda, the mind, and the Plane of the Moon. According to Śankarānanda's explanation the verse may be translated as follows: "If, on the other hand, he meditates on *two letters* or for *two measures of time*, then he is led up . . ." According to some other commentators the word *mind*, in the text, refers to Hiranyagarbha, who identifies Himself with the phenomenal universe, which is like the dream of the Cosmic Mind.

*The result of meditating on AUM as the symbol of Saguna Brahman:*

5

Again, he who meditates on the Highest Person through this syllable AUM consisting of three letters, becomes united with the effulgent sun. As a snake is freed from its skin, even so he is freed from sin.

He is led up by the sāma verses to the World of Brahmā. From this, which is the aggregate of all lives, he beholds the Supreme Purusha, higher than the High and pervading all bodies.

As to this there are these two verses:

**MEDITATES:** Compare *Mu. Up.* II. ii. 5-6.

**HIGHEST PERSON:** Refers to Saguna Brahman, who is described in the Vedas as dwelling in the solar orb. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 71 ff; p. 86.)

**SĀMA VERSES:** The verses of the Sāma-Veda, of which *M* is the symbol.

**WORLD OF BRAHMĀ:** That is to say, of Hiranyagarbha. This exalted plane is known also as Satyaloka. Hiranyagarbha, representing the World Soul, is the totality of the souls of all living beings. Like the "cow-ness" present in all cows, He is present in all beings.

**FROM THIS:** Unlike those who go to the Plane of the Moon. One who attains Brahmāloka does not return to earth.

**THE HIGH:** Refers to Hiranyagarbha, who is supreme among all phenomenal beings.

**PERVADING ETC:** As their inmost Self.

*The first verse:*

## 6

The three letters of AUM [if employed separately] are mortal; but when joined together in meditation on the total Reality and used properly on the activities of the external, internal, and intermediate states, the knower trembles not.

**THE THREE LETTERS ETC:** If the aspirant meditates separately on each of the three letters constituting AUM, he is born again in this world. (See V. 3-4.) This is because *A*, *U*, and *M*, taken separately, do not indicate Saguna Brahman, the realization of which alone enables one to transcend death.

**BUT WHEN . . . REALITY:** That is to say, when the three letters are joined together to form the syllable AUM and when that syllable is used as the symbol of Brahman, or the Cosmic Reality.

**TOTAL REALITY:** The word seems to indicate Saguna Brahman, who comprises the totality of the phenomenal universe. (Compare V. 5.)

**USED PROPERLY:** At the time of meditation. The aspirant should contemplate his identity with the object of meditation.

**ACTIVITIES ETC:** The three states referred to are those of waking, dreamless sleep, and dreaming.

**TREMbles NOT:** As a result of meditation on Brahman the aspirant realizes his oneness with Saguna Brahman, or the World Soul. Therefore he has no reason to be afraid of anything. Attaining Brahmaloka, he overcomes death and rebirth.

Of the three letters of the syllable AUM, *A* represents the earth, the Rīg-Veda, and the waking state; *U*, the intermediate space, the Yajur-Veda, and the dream state; and *M*, heaven, the Sāma-Veda, and deep sleep. Further, three deities, namely, Virāt, Hiranyagarbha, and Īśvara, control the three states respectively. (See *Mā. Up.* 3-5.) The seeker meditating on the three letters separately, as the symbols of the three deities, attains corresponding planes after death. But he who meditates on the entire syllable AUM, bearing in mind his identity with Brahman, attains Brahmaloka and ultimately final Liberation. While meditating, he should think of his oneness with Virāt, Hiranyagarbha, and Īśvara, and with the Supreme Brahman. There is no fear whatsoever in Brahmaloka.

*The second verse summarizes the whole topic:*

## 7

The wise man, meditating on AUM, attains this world by means of the rik verses; the intermediate world by means of the yajur verses; and that which is known to the seers by means of the sāma verses. And also through the syllable AUM he realizes that which is tranquil, free from decay, death, and fear, and which is the Highest.

**THAT WHICH . . . SEERS:** That is to say, Brahmaloka.

**AND ALSO ETC:** AUM may be used as a means for realizing both the Lower Brahman and the Higher Brahman. The blessed soul dwelling in Brahmaloka devotes himself to meditation on the undifferentiated Brahman and in the end attains it.

The three letters of AUM, associated with three sounds, have been described above. There is another aspect of AUM, known as the ardhamaṭrā, or half letter, an undifferentiated sound which lingers after the three differentiated sounds die away. This is called the Fourth and is used as the symbol of Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, the attributeless Brahman. (See *Mā. Up.* 12.)

AUM is the sound symbol of Brahman, the first sound produced at the beginning of creation. The Creator, Brahmā, with the help of AUM, manifests the three principal Vedas and the three worlds. Further, the three letters of AUM comprise the three feet of the Gāyatri. From *A* was

produced the first foot of the Gāyatri: *Tat saviturvarenyam*—"That which is adored by the sun"—which was expanded into the Rig-Veda; from U, the second foot: *Bhargo devasya dhimahi*—"We meditate on that which is the power of the deity"—which was expanded into the Yajur-Veda; and from M, the third foot: *Dhio yo no prachodayāt*—"May He awaken our consciousness"—which was expanded into the Sāma-Veda. The Atharva-Veda, dealing mostly with sacrifices and rituals, is excluded from the Trayī, or Vedic Triad. (For a further description of Aum see *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 75, 138-139.)

*Here ends the Fifth Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*

## QUESTION VI

THEN Sukeśā, the son of Bharadvāja, said to Pippalāda: Sir, Hiranyābha, the prince of Kosala, once came to me and asked this question: "O son of Bharadvāja, do you know the Person with sixteen parts?" I said to the prince: "I do not know Him; if I knew Him, why should I not tell you? Surely he who speaks what is not true withers away to the very root; therefore I should not speak untruth." Then he silently mounted his chariot and went away. Now I ask you: Where does that Person dwell?

**HIRANYĀBHA, ETC:** The Upanishads often elucidate abstruse ideas by means of an anecdote in order to stimulate in the student special efforts to understand them.

**IF I KNEW ETC:** According to the Vedic injunction, a preceptor must not withhold knowledge from a qualified student who approaches him in the proper manner. (See note on I. 2.)

**WITHERS AWAY ETC:** The speaker of untruth is lost both to this world and to the next.

"It has been stated that the entire phenomenal universe characterized by the law of cause and effect, together with the individualized knowing self, rests, during dreamless sleep, in the imperishable Supreme Brahman. From that it follows that the universe rests in the same imperishable Brahman at the time of pralaya, or cosmic dissolution, and further, that it is produced from Brahman [at the time of the next creation]. An effect cannot be absorbed into anything but its cause. Prāna has been said to have been produced from Ātman. The conclusive meaning of all the Upanishads is that the Highest Good is achieved by the knowing of that which is the root of the universe. This, also, has been subsequently said: 'He becomes all-knowing and enters into all.' (*Pr. Up. IV. 11.*) Therefore it should be stated where one can know that imperishable Reality, called the Puruṣa. The present question is asked for that purpose." (*Śaṅkarācārya.*)

The aim of the sixth question is to elaborate what is said in *Mu. Up. III. ii. 7-8.*



*That Purusha is the inner self, the pratyagātmā, of the living being.*

## 2

Pippalāda said to him: That Person—He from whom these sixteen parts arise—is verily here within the body.

**SIXTEEN PARTS:** These will be enumerated in the fourth verse.

**WITHIN ETC:** Ātman dwells in the space, ākāśa, within the heart, which is shaped like a lotus-bud. It is to be sought as the First Principle within man himself, and not elsewhere.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The Purusha, though in reality without parts, appears to have parts when conditioned, through avidyā, by the sixteen parts which are its upādhis. (For the meaning of the word *upādhi*, see *Self-Knowledge*, p. 58.) In order that the Purusha may be realized in His unconditioned form, through the elimination, by means of Knowledge, of the parts falsely superimposed upon Him, the parts are said to have originated from Him. The Purusha (Brahman) is completely undifferentiated, pure, and non-dual; Its relationship, causal or otherwise, with prāna and the rest is not possible without false superimposition. That is why, through ignorance alone, the parts are seen to arise from, exist in, and disappear into the Purusha.

*The parts were said to have originated from the Purusha. This creation of the parts was mentioned for the purpose of revealing the Purusha. Now is given the order in which the parts were created:*

## 3

The Purusha reflected: "What is it by whose departure I shall depart, and by whose staying I shall stay?"

**REFLECTED:** This word shows that the creation was a conscious act.

*The sixteen entities described here are the sixteen parts belonging to the Purusha:*

## 4

He created prāna; from prāna faith, space, air, fire, water, earth, the organs, mind, food; from food virility, austerity, the Vedic hymns, sacrifice, the worlds; and in the worlds He created names.

**PRĀNA:** Other epithets are Sutrātmā (the ātman which, like a thread, holds together all living beings), Brahmā, Hiraṇyagarbha, etc. The Puruṣha, conditioned by the upādhi of prāna, appears as Hiraṇyagarbha, the jiva, and other phenomenal beings. When the prāna (life force) departs from the body He too departs.

**FAITH:** Which stimulates living beings to perform righteous action.

**SPACE . . . EARTH:** These elements of matter constitute the body, through which the fruit of action is experienced. (Regarding the evolution of the elements, see *Self-Knowledge*, p. 68 ff.)

**ORGANS:** Both the organs of perception and the organs of action.

**MIND:** The leader of the organs.

**VIRILITY:** By means of which all actions are performed.

**AUSTERITY:** Through austerity the minds of unrighteous people are purified.

**VEDIC HYMNS:** With the help of these hymns men with purified minds perform sacrifices.

**SACRIFICE:** Such as the Agnihotra.

**WORLDS:** To which one attains as a result of sacrifices.

The sixteen parts are created through avidyā. These created entities are unreal, like the objects seen in a dream. After the destruction of avidyā they again merge in the Puruṣha, losing their names and forms.

*The disappearance of the parts into the Puruṣha is explained by means of an illustration:*

## 5

As these flowing rivers, bound for the ocean, disappear into the ocean after having reached it, their names and forms being destroyed, and are called simply the ocean—even so, these sixteen parts of the seer, whose goal is the Puruṣha, disappear into the Puruṣha after having reached Him, their names and forms being destroyed, and are called simply the Puruṣha. He becomes free of parts and immortal.

On this there is the following verse:

**BOUND FOR ETC:** The rivers have their origin in the ocean and therefore are irresistibly drawn toward it. (Compare *Mu. Up.* III. ii. 8.)

**CALLED . . . OCEAN:** It is the name and form that distinguish the water of the river from that of the ocean. After the destruction of the name and form, what remains is only the ocean.

**SIXTEEN PARTS:** Prāna etc., as described in the foregoing verse.

**SEER:** A person endowed with Self-Knowledge, who is identical, in

essence, with the Supreme Seer. The Seer, or Purusha, the non-dual Ātman, does not need an object in order to see. As the self-luminous sun is the perceiver of its own luminosity, so Ātman, the embodiment of Consciousness, is the knower of its own Consciousness.

**WHOSE GOAL IS THE PURUŠA:** The individual self has its origin in the Purusha and is therefore irresistibly drawn toward Him as its goal.

**HAVING REACHED HIM:** Having realized the Purusha as their very self.

**NAMES:** Prāṇa, etc.

**HE BECOMES:** Refers to the person who has been shown by a qualified teacher the way to destroy the parts.

**FREE OF PARTS:** As stated before, the parts are projected by avidyā; on the destruction of avidyā they disappear.

**IMMORTAL:** Death is the inevitable end of an entity consisting of parts. It is destroyed when the parts become dissociated. When the self realizes itself as free of parts it becomes free from death.

The water of the ocean, evaporating by heat, is transformed into clouds and falls to earth as rain. The rain-water, which, in essence, is non-different from the water of the ocean, forms different rivers known by different names. The rivers feel an irresistible attraction to return to their place of origin. After reaching the ocean, they are freed from their respective names and forms and become one with the ocean, their real self. Likewise, the universe and all living beings are projected, through avidyā, from Brahman; through avidyā, again, names and forms are superimposed upon them to serve the practical purposes of daily life. Even when associated with phenomenal existence, living beings feel drawn to Brahman, their origin. When the names and forms, which are unreal in essence, are destroyed, the living beings are realized to be Brahman alone.

*The Knowledge of the Purusha leads to Immortality:*

6

Know Him, the Purusha, who alone is to be known and in whom the parts rest firm, like the spokes in the nave of a wheel, that death may not affect you.

**REST:** Prāṇa and the other parts originate from the Purusha, are supported by Him, and in the end disappear in Him. They are like waves in the ocean.

If a man has not known the Purusha as his inmost Self, he becomes stricken by death and suffers.

*The instruction is concluded.*

## 7

Pippalāda said to them: Thus far, indeed, I know the Supreme Brahman; there is nothing higher than this.

THERE IS ETC: The teacher added this statement in order to remove from the minds of the disciples any suspicion that there might be something about Brahman which had not been disclosed to them. Also he wanted them to feel that the purpose of their seeking had been accomplished.

*Adoration of the teacher by the pupils:*

## 8

And they, worshipping him, said: Thou, indeed, art our father—thou who hast taken us across our ignorance to the other shore.

Adoration to the supreme rishis! Adoration to the supreme rishis!

FATHER: There are five kinds of fathers: the begetter of the physical body, the initiator into spiritual life, the bestower of Knowledge, the giver of food, and the rescuer from fear.

ADORATION ETC: The repetition indicates the pupil's respect.

SUPREME RISHIS: The great seers who first realized the Knowledge of Brahman and transmitted it through a succession of teachers.

"Thus instructed by the teacher, the pupils realized that their purpose was accomplished; they felt that they were blessed indeed. But they realized that no earthly return was adequate for the Knowledge received. Therefore they worshipped him with flowers, and touching his feet with their heads, said: 'Thou art truly our father; thou hast today begotten, through Knowledge, our Brahman body, eternal, undecaying, immortal, and fearless. By means of the boat of Knowledge thou hast taken us across the ocean of ignorance—characterized by perverse knowledge and filled with the manifold miseries of birth, old age, disease, and death—to the other shore of Liberation, whence one returns no more to saṃsāra. Therefore it is proper that we regard thee alone as our real father—nay, more than any other father. If the earthly father, who begets the body only, is considered most worshipful in the world, what need be said of him who is the giver of supreme fearlessness?' " (Śaṅkarāchārya.)

*Here ends the Sixth Question  
of the Praśna Upanishad.*

*Here ends the Praśna Upanishad.*

## THE PEACE CHANT

Om. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajāpati!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

# MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD

*With the Kārikā, or Explanatory Notes,  
of Gaṇḍapāda*





*To the Memory of*  
*V. Subrahmanya Iyer*



## INTRODUCTION

THE MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD, like the *Mundaka* and the *Praśna* and several minor Upanishads, forms part of the Atharva-Veda. It is the shortest of the major Upanishads, containing only twelve verses. Āchārya Gauḍapāda has explained the Upanishad in two hundred and fifty verses, which are arranged in four chapters and are known as the *Kārikā*. Śankarāchārya has written a highly philosophical commentary (bhāṣhya) on both the Upanishadic text and the *Kārikā*, which has been further elucidated by Ānandagiri in his notes (tikā). The explanatory notes on the text in the present translation are based on the interpretations of Śankarāchārya and Ānandagiri.

In 1932 the Rāmakrishna Āśrama of Mysore, India, published my translation of the *Māndukya Upanishad* with Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* and Śankarāchārya's commentary. The present translation is based on the earlier one, but it has been thoroughly revised. The notes have been rearranged so as to make the text more understandable for Western readers.

In the preface to the Mysore edition I gratefully acknowledged my indebtedness to V. Subrahmanya Iyer of Mysore, who with great patience explained the *Māndukya Upanishad* to several members of the Ramakrishna Order, including myself. Unhappily, he no longer lives in the physical body. The present translation is dedicated to him in loving remembrance.

V. Subrahmanya Iyer stated in his foreword to the Mysore edition that he had been introduced to the study of the *Māndukya Upanishad* by his beloved guru, Śrī Sachchidānanda Śivābhinava Narasimha Bhārati Swāmi, the spiritual head of the Śringeri Math in Mysore state, one of the four original monasteries established by Śankarāchārya, where aspirants who had renounced the world in search of truth could practise spiritual disciplines and cultivate an understanding of the Vedānta philosophy. For a long time the disciple had been distressed by the rivalry among the followers of the various religions, resulting in bloodshed and other forms of human suffering. He had also been

distressed by the quarrels among philosophers, who often emphasized their own limited views and thereby clouded people's understanding of the true nature of Reality. Further, he wondered whether Reality—which all philosophers seek to understand—could not be reached through reason, as in the modern sciences. Lastly, he was eager to know the nature of Reality itself. Everyone claimed to have known the truth; but V. Subrahmanya Iyer wanted to learn what the criteria of truth were. He asked himself whether what philosophers regarded as Reality was not mere personal opinion that could not stand the test of universal reason.

The venerable teacher of Śringeri Math explained to him the difference between relative or partial truth (*matam*), reached through the investigation of partial data—as in theology, the physical sciences, and mysticism—and Ultimate Truth (*Tattvam*), based on the totality of experience, which belongs to the domain of philosophy proper (*darśana*). Vedānta, he said, especially in its non-dualistic interpretation, discusses Reality and establishes it on rational grounds based on experience. Truth is free from all disputes and is not in conflict with any religion or school of thought, or with the evidence of scripture. The Great Truth is free from all contradictions, whereas small truths meet with opposition. Personal bliss is no test of Ultimate Truth, as it is of heaven. Nor is Truth a private experience, as claimed by the mystics. It is not based even on the conclusions of intellectual philosophers, who are often at variance with one another. One of the tests of Truth is that it promotes the welfare of all beings.

The teacher urged V. Subrahmanya Iyer to study and assimilate the *Māndukya Upanishad* and Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā*; and the disciple carried out the guru's wish, spending half a century in this study. He had been trained as a mathematician and taught the subject in the University of Mysore. He was equally familiar with Western logic, philosophy, and science. As a result he acquired a rich wisdom which he untiringly imparted to those who had the privilege of studying with him the *Māndukya Upanishad* and Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā*.

The name of Gauḍapāda is little known in the West. According to Hindu tradition he was the teacher of Govindapāda, the teacher of Śankarāchārya. Modern scholars believe that Śankara (which is the shortened form of Śankarāchārya) was born about 788 A. D. Ānandagiri says in his commentary on the *Kārikā* (IV. 1.) that Gauḍapāda practised austerities and meditation, the indispensable disciplines of

all genuine Hindu philosophers, in the Badarikāśrama in the interior of the Himālayas. As a result the wisdom of Advaita Vedānta was revealed to him by the Deity, who is worshipped there as God-Man, Nara-Nārāyana.

Gauḍapāda is the first Vedāntic philosopher known to Indian history in the post-Upanishadic period. If one accepts the current speculations about when he lived, one must be willing to grant that he was born after such well-known Buddhist philosophers as Āśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. Some of his arguments do, indeed, resemble those of the Buddhist vijñānavādis, or idealists. Like them, he refuted the reality of external objects by asserting that all such objects are mere states of mind. From this resemblance and also from certain passages of the *Kārikā*, some of the philosophers of both India and the West have come to the conclusion that Gauḍapāda was himself a Buddhist or had incorporated the Buddhist doctrines in his interpretation of the *Māndukya Upanishad*. But he himself has stated in the *Kārikā* (IV. 99.) that his philosophy is different from the teachings of Buddha. Indeed, his whole purpose was to demonstrate the ultimate reality of the birthless and non-dual Ātman, a concept which is quite foreign to Buddhism. I have discussed this point at length in the preface to the Mysore edition of the *Māndukya Upanishad* in criticizing the estimate of Gauḍapāda by S. N. Dasgupta in his scholarly work *A History of Indian Philosophy*. In the same preface I have also given my opinion of the remarks of S. Radhakrishnan on the subject in his *Indian Philosophy*, where he tries to show that Gauḍapāda's philosophy is different from that of Śaṅkara and Bādarāyana.

The *Māndukya Upanishad* and the *Kārikā* have been described by Śaṅkarācārya, in his introduction, as containing "the epitome of the substance of the import of Vedānta"—*Vedāntārtha-sāra-saṅgrahabhūtam*. In the Hindu philosophical tradition Vedānta means the essence of the Vedas, as described in the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sūtras*, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. It includes three main systems of Indian philosophical thought, namely, dualism, as taught by Madhvācārya, qualified non-dualism, as taught by Rāmānujācārya, and absolute non-dualism, whose chief proponents are Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya. The philosophy of non-dualism, embodying the conclusions of Vedānta, seems to have influenced to a greater or lesser degree all the philosophies and religions of India. It is the unique contribution of the Hindus to the philosophical thinking of the world.

Unlike the other Upanishads, the *Māndukya Upanishad* does not relate any anecdote or imaginary dialogue to illustrate its teachings. It is also silent about rituals or concrete forms of worship, since they are irrelevant to the metaphysical discussion of Reality. It plunges at once into a discussion of Brahman and Ātman, the inmost essence of the universe and of man, and proclaims that they are non-different.

The *Kārikā*, so far as is known at the present time, is the first systematic treatment of Advaita or Non-dualistic Vedānta. In it Gauḍapāda has established non-dualism on a philosophical basis. He deals with the subject matter purely on rational grounds (*upapatti*) independent of scriptural revelation. Devoid of religious, mystical, or scholastic elements, the *Kārikā* deals exclusively with philosophy. The one theme running through the *Kārikā* is the reality of the non-dual and birthless Ātman. Śaṅkarācārya, who has commented only on the major Upanishads, the *Brahma Sūtras*, and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, thought it necessary to write a commentary on the *Kārikā*, which fact proves its importance in Vedāntic literature. The profundity of the *Kārikā* easily gives it the status of an Upanishad.

The Upanishads mention various disciplines which pupils should practise before they take up the study of Vedānta. In the Western world a student of philosophy is expected to cultivate truthfulness about facts and intellectual integrity, his aim being to acquire knowledge. But the goal of a student of Indian philosophy is not only to know Reality but to realize it and mould his life according to Reality. Intellectual knowledge is mediate and indirect and cannot altogether free the mind from its attachment to illusory objects, which are directly apprehended. Only an immediate and direct knowledge of Reality can destroy a man's belief in the reality of impermanent phenomena. Therefore rigorous disciplines are indispensable for the actual experience of Reality. The Upanishads ask the pupil to practise various disciplines, such as austerity (*tapas*), continence (*brahmacharya*), truthfulness (*satyam*), and reverence (*śraddhā*). Vedānta lays down four general disciplines. These are discrimination between the Real and the unreal, renunciation of the unreal, a group of six virtues (calmness of mind, control of the senses, self-settledness, forbearance, concentration, and faith), and lastly, an irrepressible longing for the Knowledge of Reality. Non-attachment is the foremost virtue demanded of the student of the *Kārikā*—non-attachment not only to material objects, fame, and the desire for power, but to all the preconceptions and prejudices that often distort the vision

even of astute investigators. It is much easier to be non-attached to one's body or to the physical world than to be so to one's own favourite theories or ideas. The discipline for the attainment of the Knowledge of Non-duality is named by Gauḍapāda *asparśa-yoga*, which means "the yoga that is not related to any object" (because after proper investigation objects are found to possess no reality of their own). This philosophical discipline requires that the student should sever all relationships with entities other than the non-dual Ātman. According to Gauḍapāda it is only through ignorance that one admits the reality of the phenomenal world, including one's own individuality.

The philosophical method followed in the *Kārikā* to arrive at Reality is mentioned in all the major Upanishads. It is known as the analysis of the three states (*avasthātraya*) covering the totality of man's experience. These are the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Modern philosophers depend upon experience in order to arrive at true knowledge. They resent the influence of scriptural or supernatural authority. Truth must be based upon facts verifiable by logic. The philosophers of naturalism, empiricism, and logical positivism in the West uphold this position. Gauḍapāda accepts their point of view but says that the analysis of partial experience gives only a partial truth, whereas total truth demands the investigation of the totality of experience. The physical sciences, psychology, and religion confine their inquiry to the data provided by the waking state, that is to say, to the physical world perceived by the sense-organs. Freud and some other psychologists analyse dreams, not in order to arrive at philosophical truth but merely for the limited purpose of determining the nature of a man's inhibited tendencies. The study of the phenomenon of deep sleep has not been undertaken at all by Western thinkers, who generally describe it as total unconsciousness and therefore hold it to be meaningless.

As we have seen, the data of waking experience form the sole basis of the interpretation of life and the universe advanced by the physical sciences. If reality is exhausted by the tangible universe, there is no need to consider other forms of experience; materialistic philosophy should be complete and adequate. There will be no end of systems of philosophy based on the data of the waking state alone. On the other hand, the analysis of the dream state—when the physical body and organs are inactive and when an internal world is revealed, with its subject, object, and instruments of knowledge—provides the data of idealistic philosophy, or more correctly, subjective idealism. The study



of deep sleep—when the knowledge of particulars is covered, as it were, by a veil and the sleeping person experiences both happiness and an absence of knowledge—may lead to a kind of spurious mysticism. (A man's statement, after waking from deep sleep, that he slept happily and did not know anything at that time, bears witness to a universal experience. In deep sleep a thief forgets that he is a thief; a murderer, that he is a murderer; a scholar, that he is a scholar; a saint, that he is a saint.) Vedānta, in a unique fashion, co-ordinates the experiences of the three states and arrives at the unique conclusion that there exists an unconditioned Pure Consciousness, which transcends the limitations of the three states, which is immutable and unaffected by time, space, and causality, and which, from its own standpoint, is without content. In deep meditation or in the contemplation of art, when the ego is transcended, one has a glimpse of this unitive knowledge.

Real consciousness is without a break; otherwise another consciousness must be assumed to be aware of the interruption in consciousness. According to Advaita Vedānta, Pure Consciousness, or Turiya, is the same as the non-dual, birthless Ātman, or Brahman. It is Ultimate Reality—uncreated and free from causality. It does not produce any effect nor is it produced from a cause. It alone exists. One who sees creation or evolution and the multiplicity that follows upon it, is subject to a metaphysical ignorance, called māyā or avidyā. From the standpoint of Turiya, māyā is non-existent. To the illumined person everything is the non-dual Ātman—even what an "ignorant" person sees as the universe of multiplicity. What the deluded see as water, in a mirage, is nothing but the desert. The desert never produces or contains water. Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, is the true nature of man. It is called the mind when associated with the false ideas of causality and the subject-object relationship. It appears as the physical world when viewed through the sense-organs. If one is free from the notion of causality, one finds the mind and the universe to be nothing but Turiya.

Religion, mysticism, theology, art, science, and psychology give partial truths. Such truths Gauḍapāda does not altogether reject. They are, to him, stages in the evolution of philosophical thinking, which culminates in the experience of Ultimate Reality. *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*—"All that exists is Brahman." (*Chh. Up.* III. xiv. 1.) Therefore Turiya fulfils the conditions of Reality laid down by Gauḍapāda, namely, absence of disputes and conflicts, and promotion of the welfare of all beings rather than mere personal satisfaction.

Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* is divided into four chapters: Āgama (scripture), Vaitathya (the illusoriness of sense-experiences), Advaita (Non-duality), and Alātaśānti (the quenching of the fire-brand). The first chapter is based on the Vedic revelation. Vedānta admits three criteria of truth: scriptural revelation, reflection, and experience. Scripture describes Ultimate Reality as revealed to the seers, whose minds were purified and made one-pointed by the practice of self-control and concentration. By means of reflection the pupil tests the validity of what he learns from scripture through a qualified teacher. Through contemplation Reality becomes evident, "like a fruit in the palm of one's hand." Experience gives the final stamp of validity. Scripture proposes, but reason and experience dispose. All these three act as mutual checks on one another. When scriptural evidence, reflection, and personal experience point to the same conclusion, one can be sure of having arrived at Truth, which may be further corroborated by the tests mentioned before, namely, it must be free from disputes and conflicts and must promote the welfare of all beings.

It is a favourite method of both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya to quote the Vedas while engaged in discussion with those who accept the authority of the scriptures, but to follow the method of reason while arguing with those who do not. The second, third, and fourth chapters of the *Kārikā* prove by means of reason the reality of Turiya, which has been established in the first chapter on scriptural authority alone.

The first chapter discusses Turiya by means of the Vedic symbol AUM. The restless mind cannot think of the transcendental Reality without the help of a concrete symbol. Thinking is possible only through symbols. The student is asked to imagine four parts in Brahman, or Cosmic Reality. They are called four quarters. The first three—gross, subtle, and causal—constitute the phenomenal world. The fourth, so called only in relation to the three just mentioned, is transcendental, being beyond time, space, and causality. It is Turiya, or the unconditioned Brahman. Brahman and Ātman are identical. The gross aspect of Brahman has its counterpart in the waking state (*Viśva*) of Ātman, when the external world is perceived by means of the sense-organs; the subtle aspect, in the dream state (*Taijasa*), when the internal world, created by waking experiences, is perceived; and the causal aspect, in deep sleep (*Prājña*), characterized by bliss and the cessation of mental activity. The transcendental aspect of Ātman, or Pure Consciousness, which is Its true nature, is the same as Turiya. Like Brahman, Aum

also has four parts, called letters. The first three are A, U, and M, corresponding to the first three quarters of Brahman and Ātman. In addition to these there is an undifferentiated sound of AUM, which comes after the first three letters are pronounced. Devoid of all characteristics, it is not any particular sound, but the substratum of all sounds. It is the same as the unconditioned Brahman, or Turiya. Thus through meditation on AUM one can realize Brahman both in Its cosmic and in Its acosmic aspect.

The second chapter deals with perception. It is shown that the objects perceived in the waking and dream states have the same status. From the standpoint of Reality the experiences of both states are unreal, though differences are admitted from the relative point of view. They are imagined in Ātman, like an illusory snake imagined in a rope. The cause of this imagination is māyā, or cosmic ignorance, which projects duality or relativity. Just as when the true nature of the rope is determined, the unreal notion of the snake disappears, so when the true nature of Ātman is determined, the unreal notion of the universe of duality disappears.

Vedānta divides phenomena into two categories: subject and object. The subject is the perceiver, cognizer, or knower; the object is what is perceived, cognized, or known. The object, by its very nature, has a beginning and an end; it is mutable and therefore unreal according to the Vedāntic definition of Reality. The subject is unchanging and without beginning or end; hence it is real. From the relative standpoint the eye is the perceiver of the changing phenomena of the outer world, the mind is the perceiver of the changing conditions of the organ of vision, and Consciousness is the perceiver of the changing states of the mind. There cannot be a perceiver of Consciousness; for if any other perceiver is postulated, it cannot be anything but Consciousness. Therefore Consciousness, immutable and non-dual, is the ultimate perceiver or subject. Even in deep sleep, Consciousness is not totally absent; it remains as the witness of the non-activity of the mind. The mind, which creates differentiation, is not active in deep sleep. Therefore those who identify Consciousness with the states of the mind speak of its non-existence in deep sleep. The mind uses the brain for perception. When the brain is injured or when it stops functioning, Consciousness itself is not affected; one is simply not aware of particular objects. The consciousness of the real Seer is never absent. Throughout the second chapter Gaudapāda contends that all objects, whether of the waking or of the

dream state, are unreal for the simple reason that they are perceived (*drīṣvatvāt*). Modern science, too, speaks of the illusoriness of perceived phenomena.

Various theories of creation are discussed in the second chapter, and all are dismissed as being the result of *māyā* and therefore ultimately unreal. For the illumined soul who has realized the non-dual Turiya, "there is neither dissolution nor creation, none in bondage and none practising disciplines. There is none seeking Liberation and none liberated." (II. 32.) The non-duality of *Ātman* is the only reality, and the wise should concentrate their minds on that non-duality alone.

The third chapter deals with the non-duality of *Ātman*. Turiya is compared to the infinite *ākāśa* (space), and the *jīva*, or individual soul, to the same *ākāśa* enclosed in a pot. The *ākāśa* inside the pot is neither a part nor an effect of the unconditioned *ākāśa*, but it is non-different from it. The difference between them is caused by the material form, which, in the *jīva*, is the aggregate of the body (including the sense-organs, mind, ego, etc.), creating the idea of individuality. This aggregate is the result of *māyā*. In the realm of *māyā* the multiplicity of the *jīvas* is admitted; but from the standpoint of *Ātman* this multiplicity has no significance. The Vedānta philosophy establishes the non-difference of the *jīva* and Turiya. Wherever scripture speaks of creation or of multiplicity its purpose is to clarify the understanding of the ignorant, who are victims of *māyā*, so that they may ultimately realize this non-difference. The various illustrations by which creation is explained have the same purpose and are meant for inferior and mediocre students, still attached to the duties and obligations of phenomenal life. But in reality the non-dual Turiya never undergoes any manifestation, evolution, or change. If anyone sees manifestation or diversity he is a victim of ignorance. If Reality were subject to any kind of change it would not be real.

The last part of the third chapter deals with various philosophical disciplines for the realization of Non-duality, but warns the student not to identify the non-activity experienced in deep sleep, or created by artificial means, with the genuine peace that comes from the true understanding of Turiya.

The fourth chapter begins with the problem of causality and deals with the subject from various standpoints. Gauḍapāda discusses the views both of those who believe in the production of the effect from an existing cause and of those who believe in the production of the

effect from a non-existing cause, and shows that neither of these positions can be supported by reason. The entire phenomenal universe is an illusion conjured up by *māyā*, and all the entities perceived within it are unreal. Therefore, from the standpoint of Reality, there are no such categories as the perceiver and the perceived. Consciousness remains ever unrelated to objects or to the ideas created by them. The unreality of the manifold, based upon the subject-object relationship, is explained by means of the illustration of a dream. The categories of subject and object, and cause and effect, it is pointed out, are only states of the mind under the spell of ignorance. To the illumined, free from the illusory notion of causality, these states are nothing but the mind, or Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness remains what it is, even though the unillumined associate its movements with creation, preservation, and destruction. This is brought out by the illustration of the fire-brand. The end of a stick being lighted, when the stick is moved swiftly, one sees a circle or a square or a triangle, depending upon the nature of the movement. When the movement stops, one again sees the point of fire at the end of the stick. Even when the stick moves, what really exists is the point of fire at the end of the stick. Likewise, when the mind moves, one sees such ideas as subject and object, cause and effect. When the mind becomes tranquil it is realized as Pure Consciousness. Even in what is imagined as the subject and the object the wise see only Pure Consciousness, or *Turiya*. When the mind, free from ignorance, ceases to project ideas, it reveals its true nature, or Pure Consciousness. This mind itself is the non-dual *Ātman*, or Ultimate Reality, which is imagined by perverted logicians to be either existent or non-existent, or both existent and non-existent, or totally non-existent. But in reality *Ātman* is free from all illusions. *Gauḍapāda* describes it thus: "No *jiva* ever comes into existence. There exists no cause that can produce it. The supreme truth is that nothing ever is born." (IV. 71.)

Students of the *Māndukya Upanishad* and the *Kārikā* will find in them discussions of such major problems of philosophy as the nature of the external and internal worlds, the nature of Consciousness, and the meaning of causality. There remains little more for philosophy to discuss. They establish the non-dual, immortal, and spiritual nature of man. Their method is the rational investigation of the totality of human experience. This rational method is the unique feature of the



Upanishads and of Non-dualistic Vedānta as explained by Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya.

The true import and the philosophical position of Non-dualistic Vedānta are hardly known in the Western world. Not only Western scholars, but many of their Indian followers, characterize it by such names as idealism, illusionism, and pantheism. Non-dualists, to be sure, admit the appropriateness of these positions in the evolution of philosophical thinking, especially when one tries to define Reality with the help of the data of empirical experience (the waking state) alone. But from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality itself, Vedānta is not idealism; for it does not accept, in the traditional Platonic fashion, the duality of illusory external objects and real ideas. Nor does Vedānta teach, like the Buddhist idealists, the reality of ideas alone, possessing the characteristics of momentariness, birth, death, and misery. Vedānta is certainly not pantheism; for it does not recognize a God, independent of Ātman, who has become the universe. It repudiates causality from the highest standpoint, that is to say, in the realm of Being—whatever may be its validity in the realm of becoming—and thus repudiates the process of becoming. Gauḍapāda denies the manifestation, evolution, or becoming of the non-dual Ātman. Though he accepts the theory of māyā, or cosmic ignorance, as a good explanation of the universe from the relative standpoint, he denies the reality of māyā from the standpoint of Ātman. (I. 17-18; II. 6, 32.) Like the naturalists, he accepts the idea that Reality can be known only by investigation into experience; but he does not, like them, limit experience to the tangible world alone.

As with all true philosophers, Gauḍapāda starts with the perceptual world and pursues his inquiry into it. If the word *real* be confined to percepts alone, then Gauḍapāda is not a realist. If the word *ideal* be confined to what is known within, independent of the senses, then he is not an idealist. But he admits that the concepts *ideal* and *real* are of value as steps leading to Ultimate Reality, which is beyond both idealism and realism, and religious experience as well, all of which refer to the world of duality. To him the external world of the sciences and the internal world of so-called mysticism are equally unreal from the standpoint of the highest Truth. But he does not, like certain of the Buddhist nihilists, teach that Ultimate Reality is a void or total negation. According to him, Ultimate Reality is free from all attributes, including the attribute of non-being. He denies the category of relationship in

Ultimate Reality (III. 39.), and he does not accept personal satisfaction as a test of it.

In the opinion of Gauḍapāda, the jiva, known as the phenomenal being, is itself Ultimate Reality, the non-dual and unborn Ātman. "No jiva ever comes into existence. There exists no cause that can produce it. The supreme truth is that nothing ever is born." (III. 48.) The jivas are all peace from the very beginning. It is not that they were perfect before manifestation and have become imperfect after being individualized in the realm of phenomena and in the end will again realize their perfect and unconditioned nature. This view, held by various religions, is criticized as the product of narrow intellects. (III. 1.) True understanding of Reality reveals that the jivas are not really born though they appear to be manifested everywhere. (III. 2.)

Gauḍapāda presents Non-dualistic Vedānta as the perennial philosophy for humanity. Apart from its merit in the realm of philosophic thinking, its value in influencing men's everyday actions and thoughts is incalculable. It has been said that Gauḍapāda dismisses the whole-changing universe as a mere mirage. S. Radhakrishnan gives such an estimate of the *Kārikā* in his *Indian Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> In the course of his criticism he writes: "If we have to play the game of life, we cannot do so with the conviction that the play is a show and all the prizes in it mere blanks. No philosophy can consistently hold such a view and be at rest with itself. The greatest condemnation of such a theory is that we are obliged to occupy ourselves with objects, the existence and value of which we are continually denying in theory. The fact of the world may be mysterious and inexplicable. It only shows that there is something else which includes and transcends the world; but it does not imply that the world is a dream."

Careful readers of the *Kārikā* will realize that this criticism is unmerited. Gauḍapāda does not deny the world and the individuality of living beings. He simply reinterprets them from the standpoint of the non-dual Brahman. He affirms the reality of all things, even the most trifling, from the standpoint of eternity. He sees in everything the non-dual Brahman alone. Even what believers in causality call creation or evolution, Gauḍapāda designates as the spontaneous manifestation of the true nature of Brahman. It does not create or become the world out of any particular desire. The creation "is the very nature of the

<sup>1</sup> Volume II, pp. 452-465.



effulgent Being. What desire is possible for Him who is the fulfilment of all desires?" (I. 9.)

It further appears that Gauḍapāda encourages seekers of Truth to investigate into the nature of external objects with a view to realizing in the end that the Knowledge of Ultimate Reality cannot be obtained through such investigation. One cannot give up the study of phenomenal objects so long as they appear to be real; but if this study is pursued according to the Vedāntic method, it finally reveals the unreality of phenomena.

The theory of māyā is accepted by Gauḍapāda as the best explanation of creation for those who cannot rid themselves of the notion of causality. But even this theory is only a provisional statement on the part of Vedānta in order to explain the relationship between the relative and the Absolute. (Gauḍapāda denies a relationship of any sort in the Absolute, and therefore, from the standpoint of the highest Truth, denies māyā also.) Through the theory of māyā, Vedānta ultimately establishes the sole reality of the non-dual Brahman. The snake which a man sees, through ignorance, in the rope is no doubt māyā, but he who knows the truth sees the rope even in what others call the snake. The universe is Brahman. The illumined person sees in all activity nothing but Brahman. An interpretation of the world in the light of the reality of the non-dual Brahman is sure to remove distress, discontent, and frustration. Through the Knowledge of the non-dual Reality one is freed from the false fear and equally false expectation that constantly plague the life of the ignorant.

Vedānta does not teach man to run away from the world. The world, as Brahman, is real. There cannot be any question of its acceptance or rejection. One must regard it as the immutable Brahman and perform one's work. Then one's every action, word, and thought will be suffused with love and charity. A knower of the non-dual and birthless Brahman lives, works, and dies under the spell of Immortality. The consciousness of Non-duality imparts a unique warmth, joy, and richness to even the humdrum events of daily life.

Men of modern times, tired of the incessant strife and conflict arising from greed for acquisition and lust for power, are dreaming of One World in which the interest and happiness of one man will not clash with those of another. Non-dualism provides a philosophical basis for such a world and an unshakable foundation for freedom, democracy, and human rights.

In one who has realized Brahman, such cardinal ethical virtues as humility, control of the senses, and restraint of the mind are natural and spontaneous, and not cultivated artificially or imposed by the authority of scripture or society. Having realized the unreality of sense-objects, he cannot pursue them. He who sees himself in all, and all in himself, cannot be ego-centric. Realizing identity with Brahman, which is all peace, he spontaneously attains peace. The basis of the golden rule, in both its affirmative and its negative formulation, is the non-duality of Ātman and the oneness of existence.

Dissension, hatred, and fanaticism often besmirch the fair name of the religions, which are supposed to teach love, compassion, charity, and friendship. This seems to be inevitable as long as they accept the Personal God as Ultimate Reality. Ideas of such a God are different in different religions, and they must necessarily clash. Non-dualism does not deny the reality of the Personal God in the phenomenal world. Like other objects, He too is an idea, having the non-dual Brahman as its substratum. How can the rational mind say that one idea is intrinsically different from another? Krishna, Buddha, and Christ are but waves on the infinite ocean of Existence: *I am*. They all contain the same stuff as their inner core. A Vedāntist sees all ideas as being non-different from Brahman.

Both the *Māndukya Upanishad* and the *Kārikā* are precious gems in the philosophical tradition of India. It is hoped that their study will open up new vistas of thought to Western inquirers and help them appreciate the great heights reached by such little known Indian philosophers as Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya in their investigation of Reality.

S. N.

## VEDIC INVOCATION

Om. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajāpati!

Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

## ŚRĪ ŚANKARĀCHĀRYA'S INVOCATION

*I BOW TO BRAHMAN, which experiences [during the waking state] gross objects by covering the universe with the tendril-like rays of Its consciousness, enfolding all movable and immovable entities; which, further, experiences during the dream state the objects produced by the mind due to desires; and which, again, in deep sleep, absorbs the various particulars and enjoys bliss, and makes us also experience, through māyā, the same bliss—I bow to the supreme, immortal, and birthless Brahman, designated, in terms of māyā, as Turiya, the Fourth.*

Brahman, through māyā, appears as the jīva, which experiences the three states during its phenomenal existence. During the waking state it experiences gross objects, which are determined by its past actions, righteous and unrighteous. During the dream state it enjoys subtle objects, which are mental in nature and produced from the impressions of its waking experiences. In deep sleep the senses and the mind do not function. The jīva then experiences the causal state, in which all impressions lie dormant. When the jīva, free from māyā, is detached from the three states, it is known as Turiya. All these three states are imagined, through māyā, in the non-dual Brahman, which is the only Reality. It is Brahman alone that, as the jīva, experiences all relative states.

*May that Turiya, which, as the World Soul, experiences in the waking state gross objects, good and evil; which, again, experiences in the dream state other and subtle objects produced by Its own mind and illumined by Its own light; and which, lastly, in dreamless sleep withdraws all objects and remains devoid of distinctions—may that attributeless Turiya protect us!*

**WORLD SOUL:** When Brahman identifies Itself, through māyā, with the totality of gross bodies, or the gross universe, It is known as Virāt, or the World Soul.

**EXPERIENCES:** Through māyā.

**OBJECTS, GOOD AND EVIL:** They are the result of ignorance and attachment.

**DREAM STATE:** Brahman identified with the totality of minds, or the subtle universe, is known as Hiranyagarbha.

**ILLUMINED ETC:** While asleep, a man is debarred from the light of the sun, moon, or fire. His dream experiences are illumined by the inner light of Ātman. (See *Br. Up.* IV. iii. 6.)

**DREAMLESS SLEEP:** Brahman identified with the totality of causal bodies, or the causal universe, is known as Īśvara.

**ALL OBJECTS:** Both gross and subtle.

**PROTECT US:** That is to say, both the preceptor and the pupil, by the bestowal of Knowledge, which leads to liberation from the bondage of ignorance. Liberation is of the nature of Pure Consciousness.

## ŚRĪ ŚANKARĀCHĀRYA'S INTRODUCTION TO THE MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD

THE MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD begins with the statement: "Aum, the word, is all this." This treatise, consisting of four chapters,<sup>1</sup> is the epitome of the substance<sup>2</sup> of the import of Vedānta.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it is not necessary to make separate mention of the subject matter, its relationship to the book, and the goal to be attained. For what constitutes the subject matter, the relationship, and the goal in Vedānta should also apply in this case. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the commentators, anyone desiring to explain a prakarana treatise should briefly deal with these.<sup>4</sup>

The treatise, namely, the Māndukya Upanishad, has a relationship with the subject matter it discusses, in that it reveals the means that lead to the attainment of an end, that is to say, Self-Knowledge. Therefore it fulfils, though indirectly, the conditions of a Vedāntic treatise

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the Māndukya Upanishad with the Kārikā by Gauḍapāda, in four chapters. The Upanishad, together with the Kārikā, presents fully the philosophy of Non-dualistic Vedānta.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. the oneness of jīva and Brahman.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Vedānta philosophy, a qualified pupil should approach a competent teacher, discuss the meaning of "That," or Brahman, and "thou," or the jīva, and discover their identity by eliminating the apparent contradictions.

<sup>4</sup> There are two kinds of philosophical books: śāstra and prakarana. A śāstra deals with a variety of topics and employs subtle logic to prove its thesis; but a prakarana is a short treatise confining itself to some essential topics of a śāstra. In order to stimulate the interest of the student, it discusses the subject matter, the precise relationship of the book to the subject matter, and the purpose served by its study. A fourth point, namely, the qualifications of a competent pupil, is also discussed. These are the four indispensable factors dealt with in all Vedāntic treatises. Śankarāchārya describes the Māndukya Upanishad and the Kārikā as a prakarana treatise and states that they fulfil all the conditions of such a work.

by pointing out the specific relationship, the subject matter, and the end to be attained.<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is the end in view? It is thus explained: As a man stricken with disease regains his normal health when the disease is removed,<sup>6</sup> so Ātman, identifying itself with misery,<sup>7</sup> recovers its normal state<sup>8</sup> when the duality manifesting itself as the phenomenal universe is destroyed.<sup>9</sup> This realization of Non-duality is the end to be achieved. The manifoldness of duality is produced by avidyā; it is destroyed by Vidya (the Knowledge of Brahman). Therefore this treatise is begun for the purpose of revealing the Knowledge of Brahman. This meaning is further established by such Śruti quotations as: "When there is duality, as it were . . ." (Br. Up. II. iv. 14),<sup>10</sup> "When there exists, as it were, another, then one can see another . . . one can know another" (Br. Up. IV. iii. 31); "But when everything [i.e. the phenomenal manifold] has become Ātman,<sup>11</sup> what can one see and by what means will

<sup>5</sup> The goal to be attained through the study of the *Māndukya Upanishad* is Moksha, or Liberation. The means for its attainment is the practice of the Knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Ātman. This Knowledge cannot be acquired directly through the study of scripture; yet scripture helps indirectly in this respect by demonstrating the unreality of the phenomenal universe and indicating the reality of Brahman. Thus scripture, too, indirectly helps in the realization of Brahman.

<sup>6</sup> During the state of illness the sick man believes that he has lost his health. But in reality his natural health is still there, though obscured by the illness.

<sup>7</sup> Misery is the result of the egoism, avarice, etc. experienced in the phenomenal world, which is produced by avidyā. Avidyā, or ignorance, is not ultimately real. Therefore misery is not the true nature of Ātman.

<sup>8</sup> That is to say, perfection, which is the very nature of Ātman.

<sup>9</sup> It may be asked: Is the Knowledge of Brahman an effect which was previously non-existent but has been produced by certain means, or does it always exist? In the former case the Knowledge of Brahman would be non-eternal, like any other effect, such as life in heaven, which is attained through certain religious disciplines. An effect, produced by a cause, can never be permanent. If, on the other hand, this Knowledge always exists, then it is futile to pursue it. The reply is as follows: Self-Knowledge is eternally existent. But it appears to be non-existent on account of man's identification with the body, the mind, and other factors of the dualistic universe. This is all the result of avidyā. Under the influence of this false identification a man regards himself as miserable and seeks happiness. Then, instructed by a compassionate preceptor, he practises the Knowledge of Non-duality, which destroys the illusion of duality. When the obstructions created by duality are removed, he recovers Supreme Bliss, which is the very nature of Ātman.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase "as it were" suggests that duality is not real, but only apparent.

<sup>11</sup> The illumined person sees Ātman alone in all things, whereas to the ignorant they appear as the manifold with diverse characteristics.



one see it . . . what can one know and by what means will one know it?" (Br. Up. IV. v. 15.)

The first chapter, with its emphasis on the Vedic text,<sup>12</sup> devotes itself to determining the meaning of AUM, through which one can comprehend the essence of Ātman. The second chapter seeks to establish, through reason, the unreality of duality, by whose destruction the Knowledge of Non-duality becomes evident,<sup>13</sup> just as the true nature of a rope becomes evident when such phantasms as a snake or a stick, falsely superimposed upon it, are destroyed. The purpose of the third chapter is to demonstrate, through reason, the truth about Non-duality, lest it should be contended that Non-duality, too, becomes unreal when duality is destroyed.<sup>14</sup> And lastly, the fourth chapter aims at the refutation of other schools of thought, antagonistic to the Vedas and opposed to the Knowledge of the non-dual Reality, by pointing out their untenability on account of the mutual contradictions involved in those systems.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The first chapter, known as the Āgama Prakaraṇa, consists mainly of the text of the Upanishad. In the subsequent chapters the non-dual Ātman is established through reason, scripture playing a secondary part.

<sup>13</sup> Duality is demonstrated, through reason, to be unreal. When duality disappears there arises spontaneously the Knowledge of Non-duality.

<sup>14</sup> There may arise a doubt regarding the very existence of the non-dual Reality after duality has been removed. Certain Buddhist nihilists refute duality and conclude that Ultimate Reality is a void. The author of the *Kārikā* seeks to establish that the reality of the non-dual Ātman, or Pure Consciousness, can never be denied.

<sup>15</sup> It is a favourite method of both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya to demonstrate the falsity of opposing doctrines by pointing out their mutual contradictions.

## CHAPTER I

### ĀGAMA PRAKARANA

(The Chapter based on Vedic Testimony)

**HARIH AUM!** AUM, the word, is all this [i.e. the whole universe]. A clear explanation of it is as follows: All that is past, present, and future is, indeed, AUM. And whatever else there is, beyond the three-fold division of time—that also is truly AUM.

**HARIH:** An epithet of the Godhead. The invocation of the Lord's name at the beginning of any undertaking is considered auspicious.

**AUM:** The same as OM. The word consists of three letters: A, U, and M.

**ALL THIS:** Diversified objects, designated by names, constitute the universe. The objects are not different from their respective names. That an object is non-different from its name is understood from the standpoint of idealism, which explains all phenomena, external and internal, as being only forms of thought. The names, again, are not different from sounds. AUM contains all sounds. An entity can be known by means of its name; the Supreme Brahman is known by means of AUM. Therefore the Supreme Brahman is AUM. (See *The Upanishads* Vol. I, pp. 138-139.)

**OF IT:** That is to say, of AUM. By means of AUM one can know the Supreme Brahman. AUM is the symbol that most nearly expresses Brahman.

**BEYOND ETC:** Refers to the state of non-manifestation (*avyākṛita*), which is free from the concept of time. The existence of such a state can be inferred from the existence of the manifest world.

AUM is the symbol of both Brahman and Ātman and is also the means of realizing their true nature. The present chapter discusses AUM from the standpoint of scriptural evidence. The following passages from the Upanishads may be cited: "It is AUM" (*Ka. Up. I. ii. 15*); "This AUM is the best support" (*Ka. Up. I. ii. 17*); "O Satyakāma, the syllable AUM is the Supreme Brahman and also the other Brahman" (*Pr. Up. V. 2*); "Meditate on Ātman as AUM"; "AUM, this word, is Brahman" (*Tai. Up. I. viii. 1*); "All this is, indeed, Brahman" (*Mā. Up. II*).

The ultimate identity of AUM and Brahman is thus explained: The phenomenal world consists of ideas or mental states. Ideas depend upon

words for their expression. The utterance of the word AUM (A,U,M) gives the clue to the pronunciation of all words or sounds uttered by human beings. The various parts of the vocal organ that are used in the utterance of all sounds are also used in the pronunciation of AUM. Therefore AUM is the matrix of all sounds, which in their diversified forms give rise to the words used in language. The sound A, coming from the throat when the mouth opens to utter any word, is the beginning of all sounds. The sound M is the final sound when the lips are closed. And the sound U is the rolling forward of the impulse which has been created in the throat and which ends with the closing of the lips. Thus when AUM is uttered, all the various parts of the vocal organ needed for uttering words are used. Therefore AUM is said to include all sounds. The substratum of all sounds is AUM, and the substratum of phenomena is Brahman. The sounds signifying the phenomena are non-different from the phenomena, since both are illusory. When the illusion disappears, there remains only the substratum, which is one and admits of no difference. Therefore it is said that Brahman is AUM.

*The name and the object signified by the name are one and the same. The previous verse explains the identity by emphasizing the name, that is to say, AUM. The following verse shows the same identity by emphasizing the object signified by the name, that is to say, the universe. Its purpose is to help the aspirant realize the Knowledge of the oneness of the name and the object signified by it. When this oneness is understood, then, by a single effort, the aspirant can remove the illusion of both the name and the object signified by it, and realize the attributeless Brahman, which is other than both.*

## II

All this is, indeed, Brahman. This Ātman is Brahman. This same Ātman has four quarters (pādas).

ALL THIS ETC: It has been said in the previous verse that the entire universe, covered by the triple conception of time, is AUM, which is the same as Brahman.

THIS ĀTMAN ETC: Brahman, the Reality behind the universe, may appear to be a vague entity derived by inference. It may very well be a material substance. But Ātman is perceived directly and immediately. It is a spiritual substance. Further, Brahman is infinity; but the self, limited by other selves, may be a finite entity. By pointing out the non-duality of Brahman and Ātman, the Upanishad emphasizes that Ultimate Reality is a directly

perceived conscious Substance, infinite and omnipresent in nature. That Ātman is none other than Brahman is indicated by a gesture, that is, by pointing to the heart, which is often described in Vedāntic literature as the seat of Brahman.

**THIS SAME ETC:** The four quarters are imagined in Ātman to help the pupil understand It.

**FOUR QUARTERS:** These quarters (pādas) are as follows: Viśva, or the waking state; Taijasa, or the dream state; Prājña, or the state of dreamless sleep; and Turiya, or the state of Pure Consciousness, the same as the attributeless Brahman. The first three quarters correspond to the three mātṛās, or letters, of AUM, namely, A, U, and M. The fourth quarter of AUM, which is known as amātrā, or without a letter, has no differentiated sound. It is silence and corresponds to the Turiya state of Ātman. The very idea of sound suggests the idea of soundlessness or silence, from which sounds may be said to proceed. Turiya is here figuratively called a quarter. In reality it does not denote any part. It is Brahman Itself, which does not admit of any differentiation. The knowledge of the fourth quarter is realized by merging in it the previous three. That is to say, the waking state is merged in the dream state, the dream state in dreamless sleep, and finally, dreamless sleep in Turiya, or Pure Consciousness.

The four quarters are like the quarters of a coin used as currency, and not like the four feet (pādas) of a cow. A large coin, for instance a silver dollar, can be divided into four quarters. But these quarters are not essential or intrinsic characteristics of the dollar; they are designed to serve a practical purpose. That is not true of the four feet of a cow, which are essential parts of it. Ātman is partless. Therefore the four quarters mentioned in the text are superimposed upon Ātman as the quarters are superimposed on the coin. Again, the waking state merges in the dream state, the dream state in dreamless sleep, and dreamless sleep in Turiya. The three preceding states are the means of realizing the fourth, or Turiya. The attainment of Turiya is the object of philosophical inquiry. Turiya is not a *part* of Ātman.

*The four quarters of Ātman are explained. First is described the waking state of Ātman:*

### III

The first quarter (pāda) is called Vaiśvānara, whose sphere of activity is the waking state, who is conscious of external objects, who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and who is the experiencer of gross objects.

**FIRST:** He is called the first because through him the subsequent quarters are comprehended.

**SPHERE ETC:** In the waking state Ātman identifies Itself with the experiencer.

**WHO IS CONSCIOUS ETC:** The self in the waking state is aware of objects other than itself. Consciousness appears to be related to outer objects. This is due to avidyā, or ignorance. From the standpoint of Reality, Brahman, or Ātman, is Pure Consciousness. Consciousness is non-dual and nothing exists outside it. The duality of ego and non-ego, subject and object, appears in the Cosmic Mind due to avidyā. Material objects are illusory in nature, and have no independent existence.

**SEVEN LIMBS:** The word *limbs* is used here to denote parts of the body. The seven limbs are the head, the eyes, the mouth, the breath, the middle part of the body, the kidney, and the feet. They have their counterparts in the universe, namely, the heavens, the sun, fire, air, ākāśa, water, and earth. (Compare *Chh. Up. V. xviii. 2.*)

**NINETEEN MOUTHS:** Namely, the five organs of perception (hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell), the five organs of action (the organs of speech, grasping, locomotion, generation, and excretion), the five prānas (the vital breath in its five aspects: prāna, apāna, vyāna, samāna, and udāna), the mind (manas), the intellect (buddhi), I-consciousness (ahamkāra), and the mind-stuff (chitta). These are, as it were, the mouths or organs by means of which the waking person (Vaiśvānara) experiences gross objects. Like the seven limbs, these also are superimposed, through avidyā, upon Ātman. The etymological meaning of the word *Vaiśvānara* is "common to all men."

**GROSS OBJECTS:** Objects of sound, taste, touch, etc.

The universe may be regarded from two standpoints: the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. The microcosmic (subjective) entity (adhyātma) is endowed with four quarters, namely, Vaiśvānara or Viśva, Taijasa, Prājna, and Turiya. Likewise the macrocosmic (objective) universe, comprising the spheres of the sun, the moon, the stars, etc., has four quarters. The first three are known as Virāt (the totality of gross physical bodies), Hiranyagarbha (the totality of subtle bodies), and Ívara or Avyākṛita, the Unmanifested (the totality of causal bodies). The attributeless Brahman, like Turiya, is the fourth. It is transcendental, beyond all causal relations, and is the unrelated substratum of all appearances. A parallelism runs through the subjective and the objective. The macrocosm is superimposed upon Brahman, and the microcosm upon Ātman, through avidyā. Both are illusory appearances. On account of the non-difference between the subjective and the objective, the limbs of Vaiśvānara are described in terms of the objective universe. The purpose is to show the illusory nature of the

entire phenomenal world and establish the non-duality of Ātman and Brahman.

The identity of Vaiśvānara and Virāt indicates the similar identity of Taijasa and Hiranyagarbha, and also of Prājna and Isvara. Taijasa is the dream self, the experiencer of subtle ideas. Hiranyagarbha is Consciousness identified, through māyā, with the totality of minds. At the time of deep sleep all distinctions between subject and object, and also between objects themselves, as experienced in the waking state and the dream state, are obliterated. The same thing happens at the time of cosmic dissolution.

*The second quarter, namely, the dream state, is described:*

#### IV

The second quarter (pāda) is Taijasa, whose sphere of activity is the dream state, who is conscious of internal objects, who is endowed with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and who is the experiencer of subtle objects.

**DREAM STATE:** The impressions of waking experiences are reproduced in the form of dream objects. From the empirical standpoint there is a causal relationship between the waking state and the dream state.

**INTERNAL:** In dreams mental states consisting of the impressions of the waking state are experienced. During the dream state the sleeping man is aware of the external world and of internal ideas. But when he awakes and reviews the dream experiences, he comes to realize that they were nothing but the internal activity of the mind. When a man is asleep his sense-organs are inactive. Therefore the dream experiences cannot but be mental states.

**ENDOWED ETC:** The experiencer in the dream state is non-different from the experiencer in the waking state.

**SUBTLE OBJECTS:** In the waking state one's consciousness is associated with gross objects, whereas in the dream state one sees the impressions of past experiences. But in reality the experiences of waking and dreaming are of the same nature; for in both states the perceiver is aware only of his mental states. From the standpoint of dreams, the dream objects are as gross and physical as those experienced in the waking state. It is from the standpoint of waking alone that one infers that the dream objects are subtle, inasmuch as in the dream state no gross object exists for the dreamer.

The following is adapted from the commentaries of Śankarāchārya and Ānandagiri:

Waking experience is associated with many factors, such as the subject-



object relationship, the idea of agency, and the idea of instrumentality. In the waking state one feels that the objects of perception are external, though in reality they are nothing but states of the mind. The external objects perceived by the sense-organs have no independent reality. Their reality cannot be proved for the simple reason that they become non-existent when one inquires into their essential character. These external objects appear to be real on account of avidyā. We take our mental states to be external objects. Again, those who seek the cause of these mental states, which are seen as external objects, are led into a logical *regressus*. This causal chain leads nowhere. It will be shown later that the whole idea of causality is unreal.

The impressions left by waking experiences are perceived as dreams. As a picture painted on canvas appears to possess different dimensions, though in reality the picture is on a flat surface, so dream experiences, which are really states of the mind, appear to be characterized by externality and internality. Thus the mind, without any external means and only by means of impressions left on it by the waking consciousness, experiences the dream state and takes it to be as real as the waking state. All this is due to the mind's being under the influence of ignorance, desire, and action. The word *action* here means the impressions or tendencies created in the mind by the activities of the waking state. Ignorance gives rise to desire; desire, in turn, impels a man to action; and action creates impressions, which manifest themselves on future occasions. Compare: "Then [when he falls asleep] after having taken away with him [a portion of the] impressions from the world during the waking state, [destroying and building up again] he experiences dreams by his own light." (Br. Up. IV. iii. 9.)

*The state of deep sleep is described:*

## V

That is the state of deep sleep wherein one asleep neither desires any object nor sees any dream. The third quarter is Prājña, whose sphere is deep sleep, in whom all experiences become unified, who is, verily, a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss and experiences bliss, and who is the door leading to the knowledge [of dreaming and waking].

THAT IS ETC.: All three states have a common feature, namely, the absence of the Knowledge of Reality. But deep sleep differs from waking and dreaming in that it is associated neither with gross objects nor with subtle impressions, which are the characteristics of the other two. Though the same person, ignorant of Reality, experiences the three states, yet the



experiencer of the waking state perceives gross objects, and the experiencer of the dream state perceives dream objects.

**PRĀJNA:** That is to say, the knower *par excellence*. This state is characterized only by general consciousness. The other two states are associated with the knowledge of particulars.

**UNIFIED:** In deep sleep all the diversified experiences of waking and dreaming, which are nothing but the activities of the mind, reach the state of non-discrimination, without, however, losing their peculiar characteristics—just as the various objects perceived during the day lose their diverse appearances when enveloped by the darkness of night. (*Adapted from Sankarāchārya.*) This state of non-discrimination is known in empirical language as the causal state. A person viewing dreamless sleep from the waking state takes it to be the causal state because he finds that the experiences of waking and dreaming merge in deep sleep. This unified experience of deep sleep is quite different from the unity experienced through the Knowledge of Brahman; for in the waking or dream state that follows it, one again takes multiplicity to be real. After attaining the Knowledge of Brahman one never takes multiplicity to be real.

**MASS OF CONSCIOUSNESS:** That is to say, free from the knowledge of multiplicity. In deep sleep no specific knowledge is present. As in a dark night all cows appear black and cannot be distinguished from one another, so in deep sleep all discriminative knowledge disappears.

**FULL OF BLISS:** Deep sleep is a state of ease and repose. The friction caused by the subject-object relationship is absent. All effort disappears. Hence a person in deep sleep experiences bliss, in the sense that one who is free from effort is said to be happy. This bliss is quite different from that of Brahman.

**DOOR ETC:** The unified consciousness of deep sleep, wherein all diversities disappear, is the antecedent of the waking and dream experiences. Hence it is regarded as the cause of, or the door to, the other two states.

*Consciousness associated with deep sleep is known as Prājna. His nature is described:*

## VI

He is the Lord of all. He is the knower of all. He is the inner controller. He is the source of all; for from him all beings originate and in him they finally disappear.

**HE:** Refers to Prājna, or Consciousness functioning in deep sleep. In this state, Consciousness, free from the diversities of waking and dreaming, manifests in a marked degree its natural purity.

**THE LORD OF ALL:** That is to say, of the physical and the supraphysical

universe. But this lordship does not refer to an extracosmic Creator, as some schools hold. (Compare *Br. Up.* IV. iv. 22.)

KNOWER ETC: *Prājna* is the knower of all beings in their diverse conditions. (Compare *Mu. Up.* I. i. 9; II. ii. 7.)

INNER CONTROLLER: Compare *Br. Up.* III. 7.

HERE BEGINS GAUḌAPĀDA'S KĀRIKĀ TO EXPLAIN THE FOREGOING VERSES OF THE MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD:

### GAUḌAPĀDA KĀRIKĀ

*Viśva* is all-pervading, the experiencer of external objects. *Taijasa* is the cognizer of internal objects. *Prājna* is a mass of consciousness. It is one alone that is thus known in the three states.

*Viśva*: Refers to the waking state, or the first quarter of *Ātman*; the same as *Vaiśvānara*.

*Taijasa*: Refers to the dream state, or the second quarter of *Ātman*.

*Prājna*: Refers to deep sleep, or the third quarter of *Ātman*.

"The implication of the text is this: *Ātman* is distinct from the three states. That It is non-dual, pure, and detached is established from the fact that It moves successively from one state to another and also from the fact that the knowledge 'I am that' unifies the memory of the three states." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*) Such ideas as purity and impurity, pleasure and pain, and the like are the characteristics of the states and not of *Ātman*, which is their Witness; hence It is called pure. *Ātman*, being non-dual, is free from the notion of causal relation. Though *Ātman* appears to identify Itself with each of the states for the time being, in reality It is detached from them because It moves from one state to another without being affected by their characteristics. Further, on account of the detached nature of *Ātman*, one says to oneself, "I, who had such and such dream experiences and who afterwards enjoyed dreamless sleep, am now awake." Regarding the detached nature of *Ātman*, *Br. Up.* IV. iii. 18. gives the illustration of a powerful fish, which swims in a river from one bank to another without touching either of them, and remains unimpeded by the current. Another illustration is that of a bird, which flies unobstructed in the sky without touching the land. (See *Br. Up.* IV. iii. 19.)

*The three kinds of experiences in the three states are described. All these experiences, in fact, belong to the waking state alone. That dream-*

*ing and deep sleep have different characteristics is known only in the waking state. Further, as far as absence of the Knowledge of Reality is concerned, the three states are identical. Therefore the three apparently different perceivers in the three states are identical and their so-called distinction is due to their identification with the three states.*

## 2

Viśva is the cognizer through the right eye; Taijasa is the cognizer through the mind within; Prājna is the ākāśa in the heart. Therefore the one Ātman is perceived threefold in the same body.

**RIGHT EYE:** Viśva (i.e. the perceiver in the waking state) really uses all the sense-organs for perception; yet the right eye is singled out because a normal person makes greater use of his right eye in perceiving objects than of his left eye or of his other sense-organs.

**TAIJASA ETC:** After perceiving external forms a person closes his eyes and then recollects the forms in his mind. At that time he sees them as ideas. The same process takes place in dreams. In both cases the person re-cognizes the impressions of gross physical objects already experienced. Therefore Taijasa, the perceiver in dreams, is the same as Viśva, the perceiver in the waking state.

**PRĀJNA ETC:** On the cessation of mental activities the perceiver of the waking and dream states becomes Prājna. In the absence of the subject-object relationship Prājna is the experiencer of unity. At the time of deep sleep there exists no particular consciousness. Therefore Prājna is described as a mass of undifferentiated consciousness. Both perception and memory are activities of the mind; they cease in deep sleep.

**THEREFORE ETC:** It is in the waking state alone that a person knows that he dreamt and experienced deep sleep. That Ātman is the Witness of the three states is known from the knowledge of the change of one state to another. Further, Ātman is the Witness not only of the three states but also of the cognizers associated with them, namely, Viśva, Taijasa, and Prājna. Thus it is in this physical body and in the waking state alone that one comprehends the three states and their cognizers.

According to Vedānta the microcosm and the macrocosm are identical, both being only forms of thought. Therefore, as we have already seen, Viśva is identical with Virāt (Consciousness associated with the totality of gross bodies); Taijasa, with Hiranyagarbha (Consciousness associated with the totality of subtle bodies); and Prājna, with Īśvara (Consciousness associated with the undifferentiated state, or state of cosmic dissolution). Their different names are determined according to their identification with

different upādhis due to māyā. Prājna, or Īśvara, represents the causal aspect of Reality. He will be described as Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, when not viewed as the cause, that is, when free from all phenomenal relationships. The very idea of phenomenality is the result of māyā. From the standpoint of Reality it is non-existent.

*The satisfaction arising from experience is classified as being of three kinds:*

## 3-4

Viśva experiences the gross; Taijasa, the subtle; and Prājna, the blissful. Know these to be the threefold experience. The gross object satisfies Viśva; the subtle, Taijasa; and the blissful, Prājna. Know these to be the threefold satisfaction.

*The result of the knowledge of the threefold division of the experiencer and the experienced:*

## 5

The experiencer and the objects of experience associated with the three states have been described. He who knows these both does not become attached to objects though enjoying them.

**EXPERIENCER:** That the experiencer of the three states is really one is known from the waking state, when a person says, "I, who now am perceiving objects [in the waking state], saw forms in the dream state and experienced their cessation in deep sleep." There is nothing to suggest that three perceivers experience objects in the three states.

**OBJECTS OF EXPERIENCE:** They are different states of the mind.

**HE WHO ETC:** If a person knows the experiencers of the three states to be one and the experiences to be states of the mind, he does not identify himself with the changing perceivers or with the objects of perception. He knows that the objects which appear to be real in the waking and dream states disappear in deep sleep. Thus he is convinced of the illusoriness of the dream and waking experiences. He remains a witness to the appearance of ideas in waking and dreaming and their disappearance in deep sleep. Ideas are but states of the mind. Ātman is their detached Witness. The acquisition of wealth or its loss in a dream does not make a person richer or poorer. The essence or principle of fire remains the same irrespective of the quantity of wood it consumes.

The following verses of the Kārikā (from six to nine) give different views of creation or manifestation. It is pointed out that the tangible universe is not non-existent in the sense that a barren woman's son is non-existent. Its phenomenal reality is admitted. It is manifested from a pre-existing cause and it functions through the causal law. Brahman associated with māyā, designated as prāna, is the cause of the universe.

## 6

Surely a coming into existence must be predicated of all positive entities that exist. Prāna manifests all [inanimate] objects. The Puruṣa manifests the conscious beings (jivas) in their manifold forms.

SURELY ETC: Tangible entities, which are perceived to be real (though all names and forms, created by avidyā, are ultimately unreal), must come into existence from an existing or positive cause. The son of a barren woman is never seen, whether as a real or as an illusory object. If the existence of the phenomenal universe is denied, then Brahman Itself becomes non-existent. The reality of Brahman, which is incomprehensible to the mind or sense-organs, is inferred from Its effect, the tangible universe. It is a matter of common experience that the snake which, through illusion, is seen in a rope pre-exists in the form of the rope. One cannot see the illusion of a snake or mirage without the substratum of a rope or desert. If one tries to prove the existence of Brahman by means of the causal law, one must admit the reality of the universe.

ALL POSITIVE ENTITIES: Namely, Viśva, Taijasa, and Prājña. These entities, associated with names and forms, are the result of māyā.

PRĀNA ETC: One sees in the world two kinds of entities: sentient and insentient. Since like produces like, the text designates for them two causes. The Bhagavad Gītā (VII. 4-6.) speaks of the lower and higher natures of Brahman. From the former evolve material objects. The higher nature animates these with consciousness and thus living beings come into existence. The creation of inanimate objects is explained by the illustration of the spider, which produces its web from its own silk without any outside help. Conscious beings are compared to sparks, which are of the same nature as the fire from which they are produced, or to the reflection of the sun in water, which also strongly resembles the sun. To sum up: Brahman is the cause of the universe. When manifesting inanimate objects It is called prāna, and when manifesting sentient beings It is called Puruṣa.

This verse gives the view of those who regard Brahman as the cause of the universe.

The following verse gives two alternative theories about the creation: one, that the creation is real, being the manifestation of God's glories; the other, that the creation is an illusion conjured up by God Himself. Both theories accept the act of creation.

## 7

Some of those who contemplate [the process of] creation regard it as the manifestation of God's powers; others imagine creation to be like dreams and illusions.

SOME OF THOSE: Referring to the theists, who believe in a Personal God or Creator.

DREAMS AND ILLUSIONS: Compare the Śruti passage: "Indra (the Supreme Lord), through māyā, assumes diverse forms." (Ri. VI. xlvii. 18.) Śankara explains the view regarding the illusory creation in this manner: "The magician throws a rope up into the sky, climbs it with the help of his arms, holding weapons, then disappears from the sight of the spectators, and finally engages in combat with an [illusory] enemy. His limbs, severed one by one, drop to the ground, and then he rises up again. The onlookers witness the performance and enjoy it, but do not care to investigate the nature of the jugglery conjured up by the magician. The experiences of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are like the throwing up of the rope, and their empirical experiencers, known as Viśva, Taijasa, and Prājña, are like the magician who appears to have climbed the rope. But the real magician is quite different from the rope and its climber. He remains on the ground, having veiled himself by his own magic. Exactly of the same nature is the truth regarding the Supreme Reality, known as Turiya. Noble souls seeking Liberation are interested only in the contemplation of Turiya and not in the process of creation, which is unreal and meaningless."

Those who believe that God has created the universe regard the creation either as real or as illusory. Even those who regard the creation as unreal devote themselves to the investigation of the process of creation. Śankara compares such people to those who, though knowing a phenomenon to be magic, waste their time in discussing it. The wise man is interested in Ultimate Reality and not in illusory manifestation.

*Other speculations regarding the creation:*

## 8

Those who are convinced about [the reality of] manifested objects ascribe the manifestation solely to God's will, while those who speculate about time regard time as the creator of things.



**GOD'S WILL:** Some of those who regard the creation as real ascribe it to God's will. God, to them, is like a potter, who, prior to the creation of a pot, conceives its name and form in his mind. The creation cannot be unrelated or external to God's mind.

*Be the nature of the creation what it may—what is its purpose? Two alternative views are given:*

## 9

Some say that the manifestation is for the purpose of God's enjoyment, while others attribute it to His diversion. But it is the very nature of the effulgent Being. What desire is possible for Him who is the fulfilment of all desires?

**BUT:** Gauḍapāda, in conclusion, refutes all the theories of creation.

**VERY NATURE ETC:** What others designate as the universe of multiplicity, endowed with names and forms and subject to the changes of birth, death, etc., is nothing but the non-dual Brahman. That one sees duality and seeks its cause is the result of māyā, or ignorance.

Verses 7 and 8 of the *Kārikā* give cosmological arguments regarding God's existence and the cause of the universe: creation is the manifestation of God's power; it is of the nature of an illusion conjured up by God; it is the result of God's will; it is the product of time—God, the controller of time, being unattached to creation. Verse 9 gives two teleological arguments: creation is for the experience of the Creator or it is for His diversion. Now all these speculations are refuted by the simple statement that in Brahman there cannot arise any desire which needs fulfilment. Brahman is free from desires. It is blessedness itself, which fact denotes the absence of desires in Brahman. The ignorant mind, subject to māyā, believes in the reality of the phenomenal universe and posits as its cause God's will, diversion, etc. But the creation itself is māyā. Therefore all theories regarding the creation are the result of māyā. The truth is that Brahman alone exists and what is seen as the manifested universe is nothing but Brahman.

### NOW THE UPANISHAD IS RESUMED:

*The three states superimposed on Brahman through avidyā have already been explained. Within them the causal law operates. Now will be explained the fourth state, known as Turiya, which is free from causality, is of the very nature of Pure Consciousness, and is the Supreme Reality. This will be done through the negation of the three states:*



## VII

Turiya is not that which is conscious of the inner (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the outer (objective) world, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass of consciousness. It is not simple consciousness nor is It unconsciousness. It is unperceived, unrelated, incomprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable, and indescribable. The essence of the Consciousness manifesting as the self [in the three states], It is the cessation of all phenomena; It is all peace, all bliss, and non-dual. This is what is known as the Fourth (Turiya). This is Ātman, and this has to be realized.

**THAT WHICH IS CONSCIOUS OF THE INNER WORLD:** Turiya is not to be identified with *Tajasa*, the perceiver of the dream, or inner, world.

**NOR . . . OUTER WORLD:** Turiya is not to be identified with *Viśva*, or the self that functions in the waking state.

**NOR . . . CONSCIOUS OF BOTH:** It is denied that Turiya is an intermediate state between waking and dreaming. The reference is to a sort of day-dream when one is half dreaming and half waking.

**NOR . . . A MASS OF CONSCIOUSNESS:** The association of Turiya with deep sleep is denied. In deep sleep consciousness is devoid of specific characteristics and remains as a general awareness. It is a causal state in which the experiences of the two other states lose all their distinctive features.

**NOT SIMPLE CONSCIOUSNESS:** It is implied that Turiya does not, like God, who is omniscient, cognize simultaneously the entire phenomenal world.

**NOR . . . UNCONSCIOUSNESS:** That is to say, Turiya is not insentient matter.

**UNPERCEIVED:** Turiya is the negation of all attributes, including the attribute of non-being. One cannot make It an object of perception.

**UNINFERABLE:** Such attributes as existence, knowledge, and infinity are not positive attributes of Turiya. They only serve a negative purpose, indicating that Brahman is other than non-existence, non-consciousness, and non-infinity. Besides, to draw an inference one requires a common feature, which always presupposes more objects than one. But Turiya is one and without a second; hence It is uninferable. There is nothing in the phenomenal world through which Turiya can be inferred.

**UNTHINKABLE:** The predicates by which one can think about an entity are absent in Turiya.

**INDESCRIBABLE:** What one cannot think about cannot be expressed in words.

**THE ESSENCE ETC:** The elimination of all attributes may make Turiya

appear to be a void. Therefore the Upanishad describes It as a positive existence which can be realized, by pointing It out as the changeless and constant factor in the three states. The states, no doubt, change, but an awareness underlies them in the form of the self or as expressed in the judgement "I am the perceiver." Or the phrase may mean that through the consciousness of the self alone, which forms the basis of the three states, one can contemplate the transcendental Turiya. In other words, because of Turiya, which is changeless and constant, one is aware of self-consciousness in the three states.

**ALL PEACE:** That is to say, free from attachment and aversion.

**FOURTH:** This does not signify a numerical relationship with the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Turiya is called the Fourth because It occupies the fourth place in the order of exposition of Brahman, whose three other states have previously been described.

**THIS HAS TO BE REALIZED:** The positive result of the Knowledge of Turiya is the cessation of duality. Duality produces friction, fear, and suffering.

Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, is described in the text by the negation of all attributes. No language can directly express It, either by affirmative or by negative words. But It is not therefore a void or utter non-existence; for one cannot imagine the illusory universe without a positive substratum. A mirage cannot be perceived without the substratum of a desert. It may, however, be contended that Turiya should be described as the substratum of the universe, and not in a negative way. Such a contention has no force; for the universe is unreal. No relation between real and unreal can be imagined, much less expressed, since the relationship itself is non-existent. Turiya cannot be described by any instrument of empirical knowledge, because of Its unique nature. It is devoid of all characteristics, specific or generic, being one and without a second. Being actionless, It cannot be described by any activity, such as creation, preservation, etc. Then, it may be asked, what purpose is served by the Knowledge of Turiya? Is it not something like the horns of a horse? Not at all. When a person realizes his self to be Turiya, he is freed from craving for outer objects. He is freed from the false fear and false expectation which plague the phenomenal life. When one knows the true nature of the desert, one no longer runs after the illusory water of the mirage, and when one knows the true nature of the rope, one is not frightened by the idea of the snake falsely superimposed upon it. The realization of the self as Turiya destroys ignorance, desire, attachment, aversion, etc. The gist of the teachings of the Upanishads is the identity of the self and Turiya. Compare: "That thou art" (*Chh. Up.* VI. viii. 7); "This Ātman is Brahman" (*Mā. Up.* II); "Ātman, indeed is all this" (*Chh. Up.* VII. vxx. 2). Turiya does not lie outside the three states.

It is their unchanging and unrelated substratum. The subjective consciousness, objective consciousness, etc. mentioned in the text are all upādhis falsely superimposed upon It. When these limitations are removed by means of right knowledge, the Knowledge of Turiya reveals itself. The negation of the illusory limitations and the revelation of Turiya are simultaneous. It is like the immediate revelation of the rope when the illusory knowledge of the snake is destroyed. When the ignorance that veils the true nature of the rope disappears, the rope is known at once. The knowledge of the rope is not the result of the destruction of the idea of the snake; for the rope has always existed. No other instrument of knowledge is necessary to reveal the rope after the illusory idea of the snake has been destroyed. Likewise, the very destruction of such attributes as subjective consciousness and objective consciousness reveals the reality of Turiya, though the Knowledge of Turiya is not the direct result of the destruction of these attributes. No other instrument of knowledge is necessary for the realization of Turiya. When Turiya is realized, there no longer remains any distinction between the knower, knowledge, and the known. Therefore the purpose of the scriptures and other instruments of knowledge is to accomplish the cessation of the attributes mentioned in the text, which is simultaneous with the realization of Turiya. (The various instruments of knowledge employed to explain the non-duality of Brahman really belong to the sphere of duality. The purpose of these instruments is the destruction of duality. When duality is destroyed the instruments of knowledge are also destroyed. Then such factors of realization as the proof and the prover no longer remain. Only Brahman is.)

NOW THE KĀRIKĀ IS RESUMED TO EXPLAIN THE ABOVE VERSE:

# 10

Turiya, the changeless Ruler, is capable of destroying all miseries. All other entities being unreal, the non-dual Turiya alone is known as effulgent and all-pervading.

**MISERIES:** Miseries are associated with the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. In deep sleep one is not aware of the effulgent Turiya; hence it too is characterized by misery. On account of our remaining forgetful of Turiya we identify ourselves with the three states and suffer from various miseries, physical and mental. One who has realized Turiya witnesses, unattached, the appearance and disappearance of the states and thus rides himself of miseries.

**ALL OTHER . . . UNREAL:** The three states are unreal, like the illusory

snake in the rope. When the truth is known, one realizes that the snake is nothing but the rope; likewise, with the Knowledge of Turiya, one realizes that the three states are nothing but Brahman, or Pure Consciousness.

*The generic and specific characteristics of the three states are described with a view to determining the nature of Turiya:*

## 11

Viśva and Taijasa are conditioned by cause and effect. Prājña is conditioned by cause alone. Neither [cause nor effect] exists in Turiya.

The effect is what is done. The cause is what acts. The effect remains latent in the cause. Deep sleep is the cause; the waking and dream states are the effects. The causal state is characterized by the non-apprehension of Reality. Non-cognition is a universal feature of deep sleep. There are both misapprehension and non-apprehension in the waking and dream states. Misapprehension involves non-apprehension. When the true nature of the rope becomes veiled one has the mistaken notion of the snake. Turiya is altogether free from the notion of cause and effect—non-apprehension of Reality and its misapprehension.

*Complete ignorance is a characteristic of Prājña, whereas Turiya is omniscient.*

## 12

Prājña does not know anything of self or non-self, of truth or untruth. But Turiya is ever existent and all-seeing.

**SELF OR NON-SELF:** That is, "I-consciousness" and the objective world (which is real from the empirical standpoint). Prājña is a state of total unawareness. The ego and non-ego are correlatives.

**TRUTH OR UNTRUTH:** Untruth, or non-apprehension, is a trait of deep sleep. The dream and waking states are characterized by misapprehension. In these states relative truth is admitted.

**EVER EXISTENT ETC:** It is so because nothing really exists except Turiya. Turiya is free from causality. In the sun, which is self-luminous and light itself, it is not possible to see any trace of darkness or any light other than its own light. Compare: "The vision of the Witness can never be absent." (*Br. Up.* IV. iii. 23.)

The second part of this verse may be explained differently. Turiya is ever all-seeing because It exists in the three states as well as in their per-

ceivers. Compare: "There is no other witness but 'This.'" (Br. Up. III. viii. 11.)

*The following objection may be raised: Non-cognition of duality is the common feature of both deep sleep and Turiya. How is it, then, that Prājna alone, and not Turiya also, is conditioned by causality?*

## 13

Non-cognition of duality is common to both Prājna and Turiya. But Prājna is associated with sleep in the form of cause, and this sleep does not exist in Turiya.

**SLEEP ETC:** Deep sleep, characterized by the absence of the Knowledge of Reality, gives rise to the cognition of variety in the two other states.

**DOES NOT EXIST ETC:** Because Turiya is ever all-seeing.

The contention that Turiya and Prājna may both be characterized as the causal state, on account of the common feature of non-perception of duality in both cases, is the result of a wrong inference based upon insufficient data. Prājna is said to be the causal state because it precedes the experiences of waking and dreaming. But this does not apply to Turiya, because It is not the immediately preceding condition of any state. Turiya is not a state that is antecedent or subsequent to any other state. It is the unrelated ground of all other states. Turiya is Pure Consciousness, non-dual and unchanging. It cannot be said to produce anything. Therefore the causal condition does not exist in Turiya; if it did Turiya would be the same as Prājna.

*The difference between Turiya and the three states:*

## 14

The first two [Viśva and Taijasa] are associated with dreaming and sleep respectively; Prājna, with sleep bereft of dreams. Knowers of Brahman see neither sleep nor dreams in Turiya.

**DREAMING:** Misapprehension of Reality, for instance, the regarding of Ātman as endowed with body, senses, etc.

The knower of Brahman does not see dreams or sleep (that is to say, any causal relation) in Turiya, since it would be inconsistent, like seeing darkness in the sun.

*When does one realize Turiya?*

## 15

Dreaming is the wrong cognition, and sleep the non-cognition, of Reality. When the erroneous knowledge in these two is destroyed, Turiya is realized.

**DREAMING:** Includes the waking state also, because there is a wrong apprehension of Reality in both states.

**SLEEP:** As stated before, deep sleep is characterized by non-apprehension of Reality. Therefore it includes the two other states as well. The chief feature of the waking and dream states is the misapprehension of Reality, and of deep sleep, its non-apprehension.

**ERRONEOUS KNOWLEDGE:** That is to say, non-apprehension and wrong apprehension of Reality, characterized by the causal relation.

As long as a person identifies himself with the three states, he is a victim of misapprehension and non-apprehension. The three states are the realm of cause and effect. By ridding himself of the notion of causality he realizes Turiya, that is to say, sees the pure Brahman everywhere and always.

*Furthermore:*

## 16

When the jiva, asleep under the influence of beginningless māyā, is awakened, it then realizes birthless, sleepless, and dreamless Non-duality.

**JIVA:** The individual soul. In essence it is the Supreme Self, but it assumes the characteristics of phenomenality because of having bound itself with the chain of cause and effect.

**ASLEEP:** Sleep, in the form of non-apprehension of Reality, is the common feature of the three states.

**BEGINNINGLESS:** Māyā consists of time, space, and causality. It is said to be beginningless because one cannot imagine the beginning of time, space, or the causal relation. If one assumes an arbitrary beginning of time, one can think of time beyond that also. The same is true of space and the causal relation.

**BIRTHLESS:** By denying birth, the jiva's other characteristics of phenomenality—duration, growth, change, decay, and death—are denied.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The jiva, the individual soul subject to the law of rebirth and sleeping



under the influence of māyā, which is characterized by misapprehension and non-apprehension of Reality, experiences such dreams as: "This is my father, this is my son, this is my grandson, this is my property, and these are my animals. I am their master, I am happy, I am miserable, I have suffered a loss on this account, and I have made a profit on that account," and so forth and so on. Then it is awakened by a compassionate teacher, who himself has known the Reality taught by Vedānta, through such instruction as: "Thou art not an entity conditioned by cause and effect, but thou art Brahman." Thus awakened from sleep, the jīva realizes its true nature. It knows that the Self is birthless, changeless, free from the stain of ignorance, and non-dual.

*It may be contended that if the Knowledge of Non-duality (Turiya) is possible only after the cessation of the perceived manifold, then Non-duality cannot be said to be eternally existent; for it certainly cannot exist while the manifold is perceived. The contention is thus answered:*

## 17

If the phenomenal universe were real, then certainly it would disappear. The universe of duality [which is cognized] is mere illusion (māyā); Non-duality alone is the Supreme Reality.

IF ETC: The disappearance of an object can be asserted only when such an object is taken to be real. But the phenomenal universe, being māyā, does not possess reality. Therefore one cannot speak of its disappearance. Only those who believe that the phenomenal universe really exists speak of its disappearance.

THE UNIVERSE ETC: According to Non-dualistic Vedānta the phenomenal universe is neither real nor unreal; its nature is inscrutable to the finite mind. This is what is meant by māyā. The universe is certainly not real; for it undergoes change and is not perceived at all in deep sleep or in the experience of non-dual samādhi. Again, the universe cannot be unreal, in the sense that the son of a barren woman is unreal; for it is perceived to exist. Therefore Vedānta describes the universe as māyā, of which neither origination nor dissolution can be predicated.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

If the Knowledge of Non-duality (Turiya) is attained after the cessation of the perceived manifold, how then can Non-duality be said to exist while the perceived manifold remains? It is thus explained: The contention would be valid if the manifold really existed. The manifold is only a false notion,



like a snake imagined in a rope. Such a snake does not really exist and therefore does not disappear through discrimination. Likewise, an illusory vision conjured up by a magician does not really exist and then disappear, as though a veil thrown over the eyes of the spectators by the magician were removed. There is no doubt that the phenomenal universe would disappear if it really existed. But the duality known as the universe is māyā. The only real substance is Non-duality, which may be likened to the rope or the magician in the illustrations already given. Hence it stands to reason that there is no such thing as the coming into existence of the manifold universe or its destruction.

*As the manifold universe is unreal, like the illusory snake, so also is the idea that distinguishes the teacher, the pupil, and the instruction.*

## 18

If anyone imagines illusory ideas [such as the teacher, the taught, and the scriptures], then they will disappear. These [ideas] are for the purpose of instruction. Duality ceases to exist when Reality is known.

**ILLUSORY IDEAS:** Such ideas as those of teacher, pupil, and the scriptures apply as long as one has not realized the highest truth of Non-duality. They are admitted only from the standpoint of ignorance and cannot affect Turiya, because they are unreal.

**ARE FOR THE PURPOSE ETC:** The relationship between the teacher and the pupil remains till the latter attains Knowledge. Then duality disappears.

It has been stated in the previous verse that the manifold universe is Brahman. The waves, in essence, are non-different from the ocean. It is the name and the form (nāma-rupa), projected by māyā, that appear to distinguish the one from the other. Likewise, the diverse objects of the world are not different from Brahman. Names and forms, superimposed by ignorance, create the apparent distinctions. Even the so-called illusion manifesting the universe has no existence independent of Brahman. The wind that arises from the air disappears in the air and has no existence independent of it; so it is with the manifold universe in relation to the non-dual Brahman. As in a dream the objects which are experienced, such as an elephant or a cow, with their names and forms, are nothing but the mind-stuff, so also the physical objects experienced in the state of ignorance, with their distinctive names and forms, are nothing but Brahman. Thus such different ideas as those of teacher and pupil have no reality independent of Brahman. The cognition of these ideas of teacher, pupil, etc. as separate from Brahman is due to the fact that one persists in one's belief

in the reality of the phenomenal plane. Nevertheless such ideas are not meaningless. They are useful for the realization of Brahman. But after enlightenment all these ideas merge in Brahman and are realized to be non-different from It. The highest truth is that the manifold universe and the various ideas associated with it have no existence independent of Brahman. They are identical with It.

#### NOW THE UPANISHAD IS RESUMED:

*The highest truth, as explained above by the refutation of the erroneous superimpositions, can be grasped only by students endowed with sharp or moderate intelligence. But ordinary students, who cannot understand philosophical reflections, are advised to concentrate on AUM as the symbol of Ultimate Reality.*

#### VIII

The same Ātman [explained before as being endowed with four quarters] is now described from the standpoint of the syllable AUM. AUM, too, divided into parts, is viewed from the standpoint of letters. The quarters [of Ātman] are the same as the letters of AUM, and the letters are the same as the quarters. The letters are A, U, and M.

THE SAME ĀTMAN ETC: The *Māndukya Upanishad* commences with the statement that AUM covers all things and also that which is beyond. Further, AUM is identical with Ātman, which is endowed with four quarters. In the explanation of the word, emphasis has been given to Ātman, which the word indicates. The present verse explains AUM from the standpoint of the word itself.

The first verse of the Upanishad states that AUM is everything—past, present, and future, and also what is beyond time. The second verse states that AUM is the same as Brahman and Ātman. Next follows the explanation of Ātman with Its four quarters. All these explanations of AUM have been given from the standpoint of Ātman, emphasizing the name (i.e. Ātman) indicated by AUM. Now the same AUM is being explained from the standpoint of the word itself.

AUM is pronounced OM. "In Sanskrit the vowel *o* is constitutionally a diphthong, contracted from *a+u*. *Om* therefore may be analyzed into the elements *a+u+m*." (R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, fn. p. 393.)

*Points of specific resemblance between the quarters of Ātman and the letters of AUM:*

## IX

Vaiśvānara Ātman, whose sphere of activity is the waking state, is A, the first letter [of AUM], on account of his all-pervasiveness or on account of his being the first. He who knows this obtains all desires and becomes first [among the great].

VAIŚVĀNARA ĀTMAN: Ātman functioning through the waking state. His other name is Viśva; he is identical with Virāt. (See *Mā. Up. III.*)

HIS: Here Ātman is personalized.

ALL-PERVASIVENESS ETC: The sound A pervades all sounds. It is present in all sounds. No sound can be produced without opening the mouth, and the sound that is thus produced is A. Likewise, the entire universe is pervaded by Vaiśvānara Ātman. It has already been stated that knowledge of the dream state and of deep sleep is possible only in the waking state. Since the three states constitute our entire experience of the universe, the waking state pervades the whole universe. Another point of resemblance between A and Vaiśvānara is that just as A is the beginning, or first, of the three letters constituting AUM, so also Vaiśvānara, or the waking state, may be said to be the beginning, or first, of the three states.

HE WHO KNOWS ETC: The fruit of this knowledge is mentioned for the purpose of inducing students to reflect on the meaning of AUM.

*The identity of the second quarter of Ātman and the second letter of AUM is pointed out:*

## X

Taijasa Ātman, whose sphere of activity is the dream state, is U, the second letter [of AUM], on account of his superiority or intermediateness. He who knows this attains a superior knowledge, receives equal treatment from all, and finds in his family no one ignorant of Brahman.

TAIJASA ĀTMAN: Ātman functioning through the dream state. (See *Mā. Up. IV.*)

SUPERIORITY: As a matter of fact, A, being the first of all letters, is superior to them all. But U, coming after A, is stated here to be superior in a figurative sense. Taijasa, or Ātman functioning through the dream state, is said to be superior to Vaiśvānara because he perceives ideas, whereas the latter sees only gross objects. While investigating dreams the student realizes physical phenomena to be states of the mind, which knowledge brings him nearer to the truth.

**INTERMEDIATENESS:** As the letter *U* is between *A* and *M*, so the dream state is between waking and deep sleep.

**FROM ALL:** Both friends and enemies.

*The identity of the third quarter of Ātman and the third letter of AUM is pointed out:*

## XI

Prājna Ātman, whose sphere is deep sleep, is *M*, the third letter [of AUM], because both are the measure and also because in them all become one. He who knows this is able to measure all and also comprehends all within himself.

**PRĀJNA ĀTMAN:** Ātman functioning through dreamless sleep. (See *Mā. Up. V-VI.*)

**MEASURE:** Both the waking state and the dream state emerge from (during manifestation) and disappear into (during non-manifestation) the dreamless state. Therefore both Vaiśvānara and Taijasa are said to be contained in Prājna, which may be compared to the container. The word *measure* in the text is used in the sense of a container.

**ALL BECOME ONE:** When the word AUM is repeated quickly several times, the sound actually heard is *maum*. That is why it is said that the letters *A* and *U* become one with *M*. Likewise, Viśva and Taijasa become one with, or merge in, Prājna in deep sleep.

**IS ABLE . . . ALL:** That is to say, he knows the real nature of the universe. He realizes that the universe perceived in the waking and the dream states is essentially the same as the experience of deep sleep, inasmuch as all the three states are characterized by non-apprehension of Reality.

**COMPREHENDS ETC:** He attains the status of *Īśvara*, who is the cause of the universe.

## NOW THE KĀRIKĀ IS RESUMED:

*The meaning of the foregoing verses of the Upanishad is given by Gaudapāda:*

## 19

When it is desired to describe the identity of Viśva and the letter *A*, the chief ground given is the fact that each is the first [in its respective sphere]. Another reason for this identity is the all-pervasiveness of each.

**VIŚVA:** The same as Vaiśvānara.

## 20

The clear ground for realizing *Taijasa* as of the same nature as the letter *U* is the common feature of superiority. Another plain reason for such identity is their being in the middle.

## 21

The indisputable reason given for the identity of *Prājna* and *M* is the common feature that both are the measure. The other reason for such identity is another common feature, namely, that both represent the state of merger.

## 22

He who knows for certain the similarity of the three states [and the three letters of *AUM*], based upon their common features, is worshipped and adored by all beings and also is a great sage.

**COMMON FEATURES:** The three quarters of *Ātman*, namely, *Viśva*, *Taijasa*, and *Prājna*, associated with waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, are non-different from the three letters of *Aum*, namely, *A*, *U*, and *M*.

The knower of the identity of *Ātman* and *AUM* is highly extolled for the following reason: With reference to *Ātman*, *Viśva* merges in *Taijasa*, and *Taijasa* in *Prājna*; similarly, with reference to *AUM*, the sound *A* merges in *U*, and *U* in *M*. The different aspects of *Ātman* are identical with the different sounds of *Aum*. He who knows this identity also realizes that the entire universe of waking and dreaming merges in *Prājna* and emerges from it. This *Prājna* is *Īvara*, or *Brahman* regarded as the cause of the universe (by those who believe in causality). He who is free from the notion of causality knows *Prājna* to be *Turiya*.

*The result of meditation on AUM as described above:*

## 23

Through meditation on *A* the seeker attains *Viśva*; through meditation on *U*, *Taijasa*; and through meditation on *M*, *Prājna*. Meditation on the "soundless" brings no attainment.

**THROUGH MEDITATION ON A ETC:** He who meditates on *AUM*, emphasizing *A*, or waking experience, attains, that is to say, controls, the

entire universe experienced in the waking state. He becomes Vaiśvānara, who is the physical aspect of Brahman, also known as Virāt. (Brahman associated with the upādhi of the totality of gross physical bodies is called Virāt.)

TAIJASA: That is to say, Hiranyagarbha, or Brahman associated with the upādhi of the Cosmic Mind. The student who meditates on Aum, emphasizing U, realizes the universe as consisting of ideas, like the universe experienced in dreams.

PRĀJNA: That is to say, Īśvara, in whom the universe merges at the time of dissolution. The meditator, after merging the gross universe in the universe of ideas, finally attains Īśvara.

"SOUNDLESS": This aspect of Aum cannot be identified with any of the sounds or their corresponding quarters in Ātman. It is the same as Turiya, which is free from the illusory notion of causality. The notion of causality makes a man see the causal relation as governing the three states and also realize that after waking from deep sleep he is seeing the same world that he saw before.

BRINGS NO ATTAINMENT: Because Turiya is everywhere and in everything.

NOW THE MĀNDUKYA UPANISHAD IS CONCLUDED:

*AUM, in its transcendental aspect, is Turiya.*

## XII

The Fourth (Turiya) is without parts and without relationship; It is the cessation of phenomena; It is all good and non-dual. This Aum is verily Ātman. He who knows this merges his self in Ātman—yea, he who knows this.

WITHOUT PARTS: That is to say, without sound. This aspect of Aum cannot be expressed by any sound. Being non-dual, it cannot even be described as the substratum of the three other sounds. The Aum uttered through sounds points, by contrast, to the soundless Aum. All sounds must some time or other merge in silence or soundlessness. The soundless Aum is the same as Turiya.

WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP: That is to say, incomprehensible. Objects and their corresponding names or sounds both disappear in Turiya. The physical world is only an idea. Therefore all objects are but ideas expressed by names or sounds. The contemplation of Turiya destroys ignorance and also the

mind created by ignorance. With the destruction of thoughts and sounds, there remains nothing by which Turiya can be comprehended.

**THIS AUM ETC:** As already stated, the three letters or sounds of Aum are identical with the three states of Ātman.

**MERGES ETC:** He goes beyond birth and death and attains Immortality.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

Those who have realized Brahman, the Highest Reality, merge the self in Turiya because they have transcended the notion of cause and effect, which inheres in the third quarter of Ātman. They are not born again; for they have realized their identity with the causeless Turiya. The illusory snake which has merged in the rope as a result of discrimination between the snake and the rope, does not reappear. Students of dull or mediocre mind who have renounced the world and are endowed with spiritual virtues should meditate on the common features of the sounds of Aum and the quarters of Ātman, as explained before. Thus, proceeding step by step, they ultimately realize Turiya, devoid of any state or sound, and attain the Highest Goal.

*Here ends the Māndukya Upanishad.*

AUM TAT SAT

NOW GAUḌAPĀDA'S KĀRIKĀ IS RESUMED TO EXPLAIN THE FOREGOING VERSES OF THE UPANISHAD:

24

AUM should be known quarter by quarter. There is no doubt that the quarters are the same as the letters. Having understood AUM quarter by quarter, one should not think of anything else.

**ANYTHING ELSE:** Refers to this world and the hereafter. For the knower of AUM all desires are fulfilled.

*He who can investigate into the meaning of Aum becomes blessed by the very knowledge of the word, because this knowledge destroys all duality. But the ignorant seeker who depends upon scriptural teachings should practise meditation on AUM as a spiritual discipline, according to the injunctions of the scriptures.*



## 25

The mind should be concentrated on AUM. AUM is the fearless Brahman. He who is always absorbed in AUM knows no fear whatever.

## 26

AUM is verily the Lower Brahman. It is also stated to be the Higher Brahman. AUM is beginningless and unique. There is nothing outside it. It is unrelated to any effect and is immutable.

**LOWER BRAHMAN:** Saguna Brahman, which is regarded as the cause of the universe.

**HIGHER BRAHMAN:** When the sounds and quarters disappear in Turiya, AUM is revealed as the Higher Brahman.

**BEGINNINGLESS:** That is to say, without cause.

**UNIQUE:** Because nothing exists apart from AUM.

**UNRELATED ETC:** Because AUM, as Turiya, is not the cause of anything else.

Dull or mediocre minds should contemplate AUM as described in the first sentence of the text. The second sentence describes Turiya Ātman, which can be grasped only by keen intellects.

*The reason for AUM's being called unique in the foregoing verse:*

## 27

AUM is, indeed, the beginning, middle, and end of all things. He who has realized AUM as immutable immediately attains the Supreme Reality.

**AUM ETC:** AUM is pointed out as the cause of the universe when a cause is sought. The text describes AUM as the cause from the standpoint of the theory of māyā.

As a magician, without undergoing any change in himself, conjures up a magic elephant; as a rope, without undergoing any change in itself, appears as a snake—so Ātman, which is the same as AUM, appears, through māyā, as the cause of the universe. But from the highest standpoint there is no manifold universe. AUM, which may be compared to the magician, is regarded as the cause by those who see the fact of creation and explain it as māyā.

*AUM should be meditated upon in the heart as a symbol of Brahman.*

## 28

Know AUM to be Īvara, ever present in the hearts of all. The calm soul, contemplating AUM as all-pervading, does not grieve.

ĪVARA: God the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer.

HEARTS: The heart is the seat of memory and perception. Though the Godhead is all-pervading, yet Its presence is especially felt in the heart.

CALM SOUL: The calmness of the wise is the result of discrimination between the Real and the unreal, and renunciation of the unreal.

*The chapter ends with a statement about Turiya:*

## 29

One who knows AUM, which is soundless and also endowed with infinite sounds, which is all good and the negation of duality, is a real sage, and none other.

SOUNDLESS: Refers to Turiya, and not to the silence sometimes associated with tamas.

INFINITE SOUNDS: The meaning is that Turiya is endowed with infinite magnitude; it is not possible to determine Its extension or measure by pointing to this or that.

NONE OTHER: Mere intellectual knowledge of the scriptures does not make one a sage.

*Here ends the First Chapter  
of Gauḍapāda's Kārikā,  
known as the Āgama Prakaraṇa,  
or Chapter based on Vedic Testimony.*

## CHAPTER II

### VAITATHYA PRAKARANA

*(The Chapter on Illusion)*

**HARIH AUM.** The wise declare the unreality of all entities seen in dreams, because they are located within [the body] and the space therein is confined.

**ENTITIES:** Such physical objects as a mountain or an elephant, as well as their perceiver, and also such ideas associated with them as happiness or misery. The distinction between a physical object and an idea is made by the dream ego. From the waking standpoint all the dream phenomena—including the objects perceived, the perceiver, and the feeling of happiness, unhappiness, etc.—are internal, being states of the mind.

**WITHIN:** Dreaming is an activity of the mind; according to the common-sense view the mind exists within the body.

**CONFINED:** According to the Hindu scriptural tradition, dreams are produced when the mind moves along certain nerves. Within the confined space of the nerves the mountain or elephant seen in a dream cannot exist. Hence dreams are considered unreal.

It has been stated in the previous chapter (I. 18.) that duality disappears when Reality is known. This statement has been made on the authority of scriptural revelation. But the making of a statement merely on scriptural authority is dogmatic. Sankara contends that the unreality of phenomena can be established as well by reasoning, independent of scripture. Those who do not accept the Vedic authority, such as the Buddhists and the Jainas, must also be satisfied. Reason is the common ground on which all fair discussion must rest. Therefore the discussion in the second and following chapters will be conducted from the standpoint of reason, with occasional quotations from scripture in support of it.

The concrete objects (such as a mountain or a river) and the ideas associated with them (such as happiness or misery) experienced in dreams are all located within the body, where dream objects are cognized, and not outside. Since it is not possible for such objects to exist within the limited space of the body, they are said to be unreal. It may be noted here that

one cannot conceive of the existence of an idea without a concrete object with which it is associated.

*Dreams are unreal because the time and place associated with them do not correspond to the actual time and place.*

## 2

The dreamer, on account of the shortness of the time involved, cannot go out of the body and see [the dream objects]. Nor does he, when awakened, find himself in the places [seen in the dream].

Dream objects are unreal because they are experienced within a limited time and place. The sleeping person does not go to another region, outside his body, where he experiences those objects. Sometimes objects seen in a dream are thousands of miles away and cannot be normally reached in a month. The long period of time it would take to visit the place and then come back to the room where one is sleeping does not correspond to the actual facts. The dreamer, when he awakes, does not find himself in the place where he experienced the dream objects. Had he actually gone to that place while dreaming, then, after waking, he would certainly find himself there. Though he goes to sleep at night, he dreams that he is seeing objects in the daytime. In dreams he meets many persons whom he does not find when awakened from sleep. All this proves that the dreamer, while asleep, does not really go to a distant place. Therefore the dream experiences are not real. This unreality, of course, is known in the waking state alone. The unreality of dream experiences is proved here from the standpoint of time and place. Even those who regard time and place as real cannot but admit the unreality of dreams.

## 3

Scripture, on rational grounds, declares the non-existence of the chariots etc. [perceived in dreams]. Therefore the wise say that the unreality established by reason is proclaimed by scripture.

**SCRIPTURE:** Compare: "There are no chariots in the dream state, no horses, no roads, but he himself creates chariots, horses, and roads. There are no blessings there, no happiness, no joys, but he himself creates blessings, happiness, and joys. There are no ponds there, no lakes, no rivers, but he himself creates ponds, lakes, and rivers. He indeed is the creator." (Br. Up. IV. iii. 10.)

ON RATIONAL ETC: As given in the two foregoing verses.

THEREFORE ETC: The unreality of dreams is established by reason. In the passage quoted in the foregoing note the Upanishad emphasizes their unreality in order to prove the self-luminosity of Ātman. That Ātman illumines all objects by Its inner light cannot be proved by the examination of the waking state alone. For it may be contended that objects are perceived, at that time, by the sense-organs with the help of sunlight, fire, a lamp, etc. But when objects are perceived in sleep the sense-organs do not function and external light is absent. The objects are revealed by the inner light of Ātman.

*Like dream experiences, waking experiences, too, are unreal.*

4

The different objects seen in the confined space of dreams are unreal *on account of their being perceived*. For the same reason [i.e. on account of their being perceived], the objects seen in the waking state are also unreal. The same condition [i.e. the state of being perceived] exists in both waking and dreaming. The only difference is the limitation of space [associated with dream objects].

ON ACCOUNT OF ETC: An object—that is to say, anything that is perceived—is unreal because it undergoes change. Reality is what is immutable, that is to say, what remains the same in past, present, and future. Consciousness, or the subject, which is the unchanging perceiver, is thus the only Reality.

ONLY DIFFERENCE: The objects perceived in dreams are different from those perceived in the waking state because the former are seen in a confined space within the body. But that the dream objects exist in a confined space is known only in the waking state. The inappropriateness of the space is not noticed during the dream.

Sankara explains the text by the following syllogism: The proposition to be established is the unreality of objects that are perceived in the waking state. *Being perceived (driṣyatvāt)* is the ground for the inference. That they are like the objects perceived in dreams is the illustration. As the objects perceived in dreams are illusory, so also are the objects perceived in the waking state. The common feature of *being perceived* is the relation between the illustration and the proposition to be proved. Therefore the objects that are perceived in the waking state are unreal.

## 5

Thoughtful persons speak of the sameness of the waking and dream states on account of the similarity of the objects [perceived in both states] on the grounds already mentioned.

**SAMENESS OF THE WAKING ETC:** Sometimes dreams, waking experience, and Ultimate Reality are said to belong to three levels of reality. From the empirical standpoint waking experience may differ from dream experience, but from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality both are unreal.

**SIMILARITY OF THE OBJECTS:** Both waking and dream experiences are characterized by the subject-object relationship.

**ON THE GROUNDS ETC:** Namely, that both experiences are perceived to exist.

*An additional reason for the unreality of objects perceived in the waking state:*

## 6

If a thing is non-existent both in the beginning and in the end, it is necessarily non-existent in the present. The objects that we see are really like illusions; still they are regarded as real.

**IF A THING ETC:** The water of a mirage, for example, does not exist prior to the ignorance that conjures up the illusion, and it will not exist after the destruction of the ignorance. Therefore the water does not really exist even when it is perceived by a man under the spell of ignorance.

**IS NECESSARILY . . . PRESENT:** All objects perceived to exist are changeable. They did not exist before they were produced; they will cease to exist in the end, that is to say, after they are destroyed. Therefore, like the water of the mirage, they are unreal.

**ARE REGARDED ETC:** By people devoid of the Knowledge of Ātman.

*The objects seen in the waking state may, like dream objects, have a beginning and an end; but they serve practical purposes. Hence they cannot be called unreal. This objection is answered:*

## 7

The utility of the objects of waking experience is contradicted in dreams; therefore they are certainly unreal. Thus both experiences, having a beginning and an end, [are unreal].

**UTILITY ETC:** It may be objected that the objects of waking experience, such as food, drink, or vehicles, serve some practical purpose in that they appease hunger or thirst or carry a man to and fro, but this is not so with dream objects, and therefore the conclusion that the objects of waking experience are as unreal as those of dreams is not right. In answer it can be said that the objects that serve a purpose in the waking state fail to do so in dreams. A man who has enjoyed a sumptuous meal in the waking state may dream immediately afterwards that he is starving. The reverse is also true. A man satiated with food and drink in a dream may find himself, when awakened, quite hungry and thirsty. Hence the experiences of the waking state are contradicted in dreams. Therefore the objects of waking experience are as unreal as those of dreams. Thus their unreality rests, as already stated in the foregoing verse, on the fact that both have a beginning and an end.

In this verse the pragmatic or utilitarian test of reality is refuted. Gaudapāda asserts that dream objects are means to dream ends as waking objects are to waking ends. A sense of the causal relation operates both in the waking and in the dream mind. Though what is considered to be a logical sequence in the waking state is not found to be so in dreams, yet each state has its own sense of appropriateness.

*It may be contended that the statement that the objects of waking experience are unreal, like those of a dream, is not correct, because the two experiences are intrinsically dissimilar. This contention is refuted:*

## 8

The objects [perceived by the dreamer], not usually seen [in the waking state], owe their existence to the [peculiar] conditions under which the cognizer [i.e. the mind] functions for the time being, as with those residing in heaven. The dreamer, associating himself [with the dream conditions], perceives those objects, even as a man, well instructed here, goes from one place to another and sees the [peculiar] objects belonging to those places.

**THE OBJECTS ETC:** This is the opponent's contention: A dreamer sees abnormal objects which are not perceived in the waking state. For instance, he may dream that he has eight hands and is seated on an elephant with four tusks. He may dream of other similarly unusual phenomena. But these dream objects are different from ordinary illusory objects. They have a reality of their own. Thus the illustration of dreams to prove the unreality of the objects of waking experience is not apposite. And therefore the statement that waking experiences are unreal, like those of dreams,



is not correct. The contention is thus refuted: The objects seen in dreams and considered abnormal have no intrinsic reality of their own. What then is their nature? They are only peculiar to the circumstances with which the perceiver of the dream is associated. In other words, the peculiar mental condition of the dreamer projects those objects and he perceives them. For example, Indra, the lord of heaven, is said to have a thousand eyes, and other deities, similarly abnormal characteristics. The very fact of their dwelling in heaven makes their possession of these characteristics natural. Likewise, the dreamer, on account of the peculiar conditions of the dream state, perceives abnormal objects. The dream experiences—whatever may be their validity during the dream state—are not, like the man who sees the dream, real. While asleep, the man associates himself with the dream conditions and sees objects peculiar to those conditions. (The dream objects are only the phantasms of his mind.) It is like the experience of a man in the waking state who, following a well marked route, arrives in another country and on his way sees different objects belonging to different localities. Hence, as the perception of the snake in the rope and of the mirage in the desert are the result of the peculiar mental condition of the perceiver, and therefore unreal, so also the objects perceived in dreams are unreal because of the peculiar conditions of the dream state itself. Therefore the illustration of dreams is not incorrect.

It has been stated that dream and waking experiences are alike in nature. But the opponent seeks to establish a difference between them, through the contention that dream objects—generally queer, fantastic, and unnatural—do not have their counterparts in the waking state. In reply, Gaudapāda suggests that dream objects, however grotesque and abnormal, appear perfectly normal to the dreamer. The latter has his own idea of time, space, and form. Just as the standard of space, form, etc. pertaining to the waking state does not apply in the dream state, so the dream standard does not apply in the waking state. Every object finds its fitness in the peculiar condition in which it is placed. Therefore dream and waking experiences, in spite of their apparent differences, being the products of the peculiar conditions of the mind, are not dissimilar. To the fully illumined person the objects of waking experience also appear to be queer and fantastic.

*The similarity of the objects of waking experience to those of dreams is reiterated:*

9-10

In dreams, what is imagined within the mind is illusory and what is cognized outside [by the mind], real; but truly, both are known to be unreal. Similarly, in the waking state, what is imagined within

by the mind is illusory and what is cognized outside [by the mind], real; but both should be held, on rational grounds, to be unreal.

WHAT IS IMAGINED: I.e. without any external counterpart.

IS ILLUSORY: For afterwards it disappears.

It may be contended that during the waking state we make a distinction between real and unreal, whereas all dreams are known to be unreal. For instance, when we see a pot we know it is real, whereas a mirage is illusory. In reply it is said that the distinction between real and unreal is seen in dreams also. For instance, in dreams such objects as a pot or a jar, perceived by the senses to exist outside and cognized by the mind of the dreamer, are held by him to be real. But again, the dreamer sometimes imagines things while dreaming and later on realizes, in the dream itself, that they are illusory. Thus, though the dream experiences are ultimately known (in the waking state) to have been unreal, yet they have their own distinctions of real and unreal as long as the dream lasts. The conclusion is that all objects, whether seen in dreams or in the waking state, be they subjectively imagined or objectively real, are but states of the mind and therefore unreal.

*The following objection may be raised:*

# 11

If the objects perceived in both waking and dreaming are illusory, who perceives all these objects and who, again, imagines them?

WHO PERCEIVES ETC: It is the subject, or ego, who remembers his past experiences and recognizes, from memory, the present ones. The subject can be inferred only from memory and present experience. If past memory and present experience are unreal, then the subject also becomes unreal.

The perceiver of finite objects is the individual ego; and the perceiver of the universe is *Īśvara*, or the World Soul. If the phenomenal universe is unreal, then both the individual soul and *Īśvara* become unreal. In that case all the categories of experience, namely, the knower, the known, and knowledge, become unreal. Such a view would imply an absolute nihilism and would deny the reality of *Ātman*. But this contention is invalid. For in order to deny everything, one must admit the existence of a denier, who is the conscious *Ātman*.

*The above objection is refuted by the theory of māyā:*

## 12

It is the self-luminous Ātman who, through the power of Its own māyā, imagines in Itself by Itself [all the objects that the subject experiences within and without]. It alone is the cognizer of objects. This is the decision of Vedānta.

IT IS ETC: That is to say, there is no extra-cosmic Creator of the universe.

MĀYĀ: When one regards the creation as a fact and seeks its cause, Vedānta formulates the theory of māyā. From the causal standpoint māyā, or the creative power, inheres in Brahman. Māyā is cosmic ignorance, under whose spell Brahman appears as the Creator, the individual ego, and the manifold universe.

IMAGINES: There is no actual creation. The universe is perceived owing to the ignorance of the perceiver. One who has realized the Knowledge of Brahman sees neither māyā nor the universe.

IN ITSELF BY ITSELF: From the causal standpoint Brahman associated with māyā is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. The creation is often explained by the illustration of the spider, which makes its web from its own silk.

IT ALONE ETC: Ātman projects the universe by the power of māyā. Its reflection in the buddhi (mind) appears as the jīva, or individual soul. Knowledge, memory, the perceiver, and the perceived all inhere in Ātman.

The self-luminous Ātman, by Its own māyā, conjures up the imagination of the different objects seen to exist outside in the relative world, and also their cognizer, the individual self. It is like the imagining of a snake in a rope. It is the Self that imagines both the snake and its perceiver. This Self is the substratum of both knowledge and memory. Therefore the conclusion of Vedānta is quite unlike the view of certain Buddhist nihilists. Again, Vedānta is not solipsism. The individual ego does not create the universe. Both come into existence together. The one cannot be conceived of without the other. Both the ego and the non-ego appear out of the mind of Īśvara when the Knowledge of Reality is veiled by ignorance. The jīva, Īśvara, and the world, all conjured up by māyā, last as long as māyā lasts.

*How Ātman imagines the phenomenal universe:*

## 13

The Lord (Ātman), with His mind turned outward, imagines in diverse forms various objects [either permanent, such as the earth, or

impermanent, such as lightning], which are already in His mind [in the form of vāsanās, or desires]. Again, He turns His mind within and imagines various ideas.

**THE LORD:** Refers to Ātman as the Creator.

**WITH HIS MIND ETC:** The distinction between external objects and internal ideas is due to one's association with two organs of perception, namely, the senses and the mind. When the mind alone is active one perceives internal ideas; when the sense-organs are associated with the mind one perceives external objects. Ātman, in association with the organs of perception, externalizes the ideas, that is to say, makes them appear as gross physical objects. The difference between externality and internality is not intrinsic.

**ALREADY IN HIS MIND:** "It is generally seen that a potter or weaver desirous of making a pot or a cloth first conceives in his mind the nature of the cloth or the pot meant for future use and then creates it outside, endowing it with an appropriate name and form. Likewise, the Lord, the primal Creator, first conceives in His mind—which consists of māyā—the subtle form of the universe to be created and then manifests it outside, endowing it with suitable names and forms which can be comprehended by all." (Ānandagiri.)

**TURNS HIS MIND:** That is to say, with the help of the mind alone, the Lord imagines various ideas.

The world extended in time and space, and its permanent and impermanent objects, such as earth and lightning, as well as various non-physical objects, such as sound and smell, are all only ideas in the mind of the Creator. He creates from His mind the ego and the non-ego and also their mutual relationship.

*Another doubt about the statement that the objects perceived in the waking state, like those seen in dreams, are only imagined by the mind, is raised and answered:*

#### 14

Those that are cognized internally only as long as the thought of them lasts, and those that are perceived outside and relate to two points in time, are all mere objects of the imagination. There is no ground for differentiating the one from the other.

**COGNIZED INTERNALLY . . . LASTS:** Refers to internal ideas, which are created only by the mind and have no corresponding reality in the outside

world. For instance, when one sees a snake in place of a rope, the snake exists only in the perceiver's mind.

**PERCEIVED OUTSIDE . . . TIME:** Refers to external objects, which are cognized by different people at different points in time. The knowledge that such objects exist does not depend upon the mind of one person alone, that is to say, of the perceiver. Thus external objects are said to relate to two points in time.

**OBJECTS ETC:** Ideas cognized internally and existing as long as the mental state that experiences them lasts, and external objects, which are said to exist independent of any particular observer, are all imagined by the mind. For instance, the notion that the world existed before I was born or will continue to exist after I die or that many things exist at present of which I am not conscious—these are all mere ideas in the mind at the present time. Past, present, and future are nothing but ideas present in the mind at the moment.

**THERE IS NO ETC:** That external objects are of the same nature as internal ideas can be understood from the analogy of a dream. A man may remain asleep only for five minutes and yet dream that he is seeing objects over a period of many years. The different objects perceived in the dream, related to different perceivers, are all figments of the mind of the dreamer. Though from the subsequent waking state the dream objects are known to be illusory, yet at the time of the dream they are known to be actually existing. Likewise, in the waking state a man may imagine that he sees external objects over a period of many years, yet it is quite reasonable to believe that from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality these external objects are also figments of the mind. There is no intrinsic difference between the objects seen in a dream and the objects seen in the waking state; both possess a common feature, namely, that they are *perceived*. This fact of being perceived indicates their illusory nature.

To recapitulate the opponent's contention and Gauḍapāda's reply: An idea exists as long as the mental state that creates it lasts; but external objects have an independent reality; they can exist even when they are not perceived by any mind. Imagination often does not correspond to reality in the outside world: the snake that one imagines oneself to be seeing in a rope does not actually exist; the reality of the imaginary snake lasts only as long as the peculiar state of mind that gives rise to it lasts. Further, external objects are perceived by other minds as well. Hence internal ideas and external objects are different in nature. In answer, Gauḍapāda says that both internal ideas and external objects are mere figments of the mind, because they are perceived (*drīṣyatvāt*).

*Ideas, it may be contended, are vague, whereas gross objects are characterized by vividness and clarity. This difference also, it is said in reply, is fictitious.*

## 15

Those that exist within the mind [as subjective ideas] and are known as unmanifested, and those that are perceived to exist outside in a manifested form, both are mere objects of the imagination. Their difference lies only in the difference of the organs [by means of which they are perceived].

UNMANIFESTED: Imaginary objects, called ideas, are said to lack the clarity of gross external objects.

THEIR DIFFERENCE ETC: The distinction between gross objects and mental ideas is not due to anything real that inheres in their very nature, both being creations of the mind. A similar distinction is found in a dream, yet the whole of the dream is unreal.

ORGANS: The apparent distinction between gross objects and internal ideas can be explained in this way: External objects are perceived by the five sense-organs, whereas ideas are perceived only by the mind. In spite of this difference, internal ideas and external objects do not admit of any distinction as regards their real nature. In dreams, also, the dreamer uses sense-organs to experience dream objects.

Thus it is established that the objects perceived in the waking state are non-different from such mere creations of the mind as dream experiences.

*How are the various entities, internal and external, created from the imagination and how are they related as cause and effect?*

## 16

First of all is imagined the jiva, the embodied individual, and then are imagined the various entities, both external [such as sounds, forms, etc.] and internal [such as the prāṇas, sense-organs, etc.], that are perceived to exist. As is one's knowledge so is one's memory.

IMAGINED: Ātman Itself imagines the idea of the jiva through the power of māyā. (II. 12.) It is like the rope's appearing as the snake. No illusory superimposition is possible without a substratum. Thus is refuted the Buddhist doctrine of nihilism.

JIVA: The embodied individual is a complex of cause and effect and is characterized by such ideas as "I am the doer" and "I am happy or miserable."



"What is the source of such objects of the imagination, both internal and external, which appear to be related to one another as cause and effect? In reply it is said: The jiva, which is an aggregate of cause and effect and is further associated with the idea of being a doer and an experiencer, is first, like the snake in the rope, imagined in Ātman, which is Pure Consciousness and devoid of characteristics. Then, for the experience of the jiva, are imagined various entities, both internal and external, such as the prānas and the sense-organs, characterized by the idea of agency, action, and the result of action. What is the cause of this imagining? It is thus explained: The jiva, which is a product of the imagination and is itself competent to create further products of the imagination, has its memory determined by its own inherent knowledge. That is to say, its knowledge is always followed by a memory similar to that knowledge. Hence first comes the knowledge of the idea of cause and next the knowledge of the idea of effect. Then follows the memory of both cause and effect. This memory is followed by a corresponding knowledge which results in the various states of knowledge characterized by action, actor, and effect. These are followed by their memory, which, in turn, is followed by other states of knowledge. In this way are imagined various entities, internal and external, which are perceived and are related to one another as cause and effect." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*).

From common experience we know that food and drink are followed by the idea of satisfaction. Food is the cause, and the satisfaction, the effect. From the memory of this knowledge of cause and effect we regard it as reasonable to cook food in order to satisfy our hunger. After eating the food thus prepared we derive certain definite states of knowledge characterized by the idea of satisfaction. This satisfaction inheres in us as memory, which stimulates us the following day to undertake a similar act of cooking. Accordingly, we perform the action, which is followed by a result similar to the one experienced before. Thus ideas succeed one another and appear to be related as cause and effect. That such ideas need not have any counterpart in the gross physical world of the waking state can be understood through the analysis of dream experiences. As a matter of fact, it cannot be proved that even in the waking state an idea can produce a correlated effect in the world perceived to exist outside. The illusory nature of causality will be discussed later. It should be noted, further, that the idea of jivahood has no beginning. In a causal series it is impossible to determine the first cause.

*It has been stated that the notion of jivahood is followed by other subsequent products of the imagination. Now, how is jivahood itself imagined?*



## 17

As a rope lying in darkness, about whose nature one remains uncertain, is imagined to be a snake or a line of water, so Ātman is imagined in various ways.

"It is found in common experience that a rope, not known as such, is imagined in semi-darkness to be a snake, a line of water, a stick, or any one of a number of similar things. If the rope were previously known in its true nature, then the illusion of a snake or a stick would not have been possible. Similarly, Ātman is imagined in various ways, for instance, as a jīva or as prāṇa, because of ignorance of Its true nature, the pure essence of Knowledge, which is non-dual and utterly unrelated to such phenomenal characteristics as causality etc., resulting in the experience of suffering and grief. This is the conclusion of Vedānta." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.) This ignorance is māyā, the inscrutable power described, from the phenomenal standpoint, as inhering in Brahman.

*Since jivahood is the result of ignorance, it is destroyed with the destruction of ignorance.*

## 18

When the real nature of the rope is ascertained, all misconceptions about it disappear and there arises the conviction that it is nothing but a rope. Even so is the true nature of Ātman determined.

**EVEN SO ETC:** The Upanishads teach, by such statements as *Neti, neti*—"Not this, not this" (*Br. Up.* IV. iv. 22.), that Ātman is devoid of all phenomenal characteristics. As the sun's light dispels darkness, so Self-Knowledge dispels a man's ignorance regarding Ātman and reveals Its true nature, which has been described by such Śruti passages as the following: "Ātman, indeed, is all this" (*Chh. Up.* VII. xxv. 21); "That Brahman is untouched by cause and effect, without interior or exterior" (*Br. Up.* II. v. 19); "Uncreated and existing both within and without" (*Mu. Up.* II. i. 2); "Free from decay and death, Ātman is immortal and fearless" (*Br. Up.* IV. iv. 25).

*No sensible man can doubt or deny the reality of the Self. "I am" is the unshakable conviction of all; otherwise no thinking is possible. Now, doubt arises about the nature of "I," or the Self. Is it the body,*

the vital breath, the mind, or the intellect, or something else? From time without beginning Ātman has been a subject of endless controversy, and this controversy will continue into the endless future—so long as men desire to ascertain the nature of Ātman through the discursive reasoning of the changeable mind. Some of the illusory ideas regarding Ātman are given in verses 20-28.

## 19

Ātman is imagined as prāna and other numberless ideas. All this is due to māyā, belonging to the effulgent Ātman, by which It appears, Itself, to be deluded.

MĀYĀ: The doctrine of māyā is an explanation of the manifold universe from the causal standpoint. By the power of māyā the manifold comes into existence and appears to be real; but it cannot affect the non-dual and transcendental nature of Ātman.

Māyā is an inexplicable power belonging to Brahman. It is the creative energy through which the phenomenal universe is projected. The very conception of the Lord as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe is the result of māyā. One can know and contemplate the Personal God through this power of māyā; otherwise Pure Consciousness, which is devoid of all attributes, remains unknown and unknowable to the finite mind. Even when diversity disappears at the end of a cycle, the Lord, covered by māyā, remains as the cause. It is only when the Knowledge of Reality arises that māyā completely disappears.

*Some of the ideas superimposed upon Ātman through māyā:*

## 20

Those conversant with prāna describe Ātman as prāna; those conversant with the elements, as the elements; those conversant with the gunas, as the gunas; and those conversant with the tattvas, as the tattvas.

THOSE CONVERSANT WITH PRĀNA: Refers to the followers of Vaiśeṣhika and the worshippers of Hiraṇyagarbha.

THOSE . . . ELEMENTS: The materialists, such as the different schools of Chārvāka.

THOSE . . . GUNAS: The followers of Sāṃkhya.

THOSE . . . TATTVAS: The Śaivas, who enumerate three cosmic principles—Ātman, avidyā, and Śiva—as the ultimate realities of the universe.

## 21

Those acquainted with the pādas call It the pādas; those acquainted with objects, the objects; those acquainted with the lokas, the lokas; those acquainted with the gods, the gods.

**PĀDAS:** The quarters. This view is held by Vātsyāna.

**OBJECTS:** Such as sound, colour, etc. This view is held by the Paurānikas, the believers in mythology.

**LOKAS:** The different planes, such as Bhuh, Bhuvah, and Svah. This view is held by the Mimāmsakas, the followers of the ritualistic portion of the Vedas.

**GODS:** Deities such as Fire, Indra, etc.

## 22

Those conversant with the Vedas describe Ātman as the Vedas; those conversant with the sacrifices, as the sacrifices; those conversant with the enjoyer, as the enjoyer; and those conversant with the objects of enjoyment call It the objects of enjoyment.

**THOSE CONVERSANT WITH THE VEDAS:** Refers to the followers of Bodhāyana and other adepts in the Vedic rituals.

**THOSE . . . ENJOYER:** The followers of Sāṃkhya, according to whom the puruṣa, or conscious entity in every living being, is the enjoyer of the fruit of action performed by prakṛti, or nature.

**OBJECTS OF ENJOYMENT:** Such as delicious food and drink. The text refers to cooks and gourmands, who are interested in tasty food.

## 23

The knowers of the subtle call It the subtle, and the knowers of the gross, the gross. Those that are familiar with the Personal Deity call It the Personal Deity, and those that are familiar with the void, the void.

**SUBTLE:** By some, Ātman is described as subtle, like an atom.

**GROSS:** By some, Ātman is identified with the gross body.

**PERSONAL DEITY:** Ātman is described as Śiva, Vishnu, and so forth, endowed with their peculiar physical characteristics.

**FAMILIAR WITH THE VOID:** Refers to the Buddhist nihilists.

## 24

Those that know time call Ātman time, and those that know space call It space. Those versed in the art of disputation call It the object of dispute; and those knowing the worlds call It the worlds.

THOSE THAT KNOW TIME: Refers to the astrologers.

SPACE: The quarters of the sky; or the word may refer to those who foretell the future by observing the breath.

## 25

The knowers of the mind call Ātman the mind; the knowers of the buddhi, the buddhi. The knowers of the chitta call It the chitta; and the knowers of righteousness and unrighteousness call It righteousness and unrighteousness.

THE BUDDHI: The discriminative faculty.

THE CHITTA: The mind-stuff.

## 26

Some say that Ātman consists of twenty-five cosmic principles; some, of twenty-six principles; some, again, of thirty-one principles; while there are yet others who describe It as consisting of an infinite number of principles.

SOME . . . TWENTY-FIVE ETC: Refers to the followers of Sāṃkhya, according to whom there are twenty-five tattvas, or cosmic principles, namely, prakṛiti (nature), mahat (cosmic mind), ahaṃkāra (I-consciousness), the five tanmātrās (subtle elements), the five organs of action, the five organs of perception, the mind, and the puruṣa.

SOME, OF TWENTY-SIX ETC: The followers of Patanjali, who adds Īśvara, or God, to the categories of Sāṃkhya.

SOME, . . . OF THIRTY-ONE ETC: The Pāśupatas.

The mutual contradictions involved in these theories prove their fallacious nature.

## 27

Those who know how to gratify others call Ātman gratification; those who are conversant with the āśramas call It the āśramas. The

grammarians call It the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders; and still others, the Higher Brahman and the Lower Brahman.

THOSE . . . GRATIFY OTHERS: Refers to a sect of atheists.

## 28

The knowers of creation call It creation; the knowers of dissolution, dissolution; and the knowers of preservation, preservation. In truth, all such ideas are always imagined in Ātman.

KNOWERS OF CREATION: Refers to the followers of the Purāṇas.

SUCH IDEAS: Those described in the foregoing verses and also those that will be discussed by men in times to come.

IMAGINED ETC: So long as men use their finite minds to ascertain the truth about Reality, they will imagine all sorts of things regarding Ātman. But Ātman transcends all mental states.

Prāṇa is the Causal Brahman, the same as Prājña, or the Self associated with deep sleep. All the entities described in verses 20 to 28 are various modifications of prāṇa. Through māyā Ātman appears as prāṇa. Therefore the entities described above are all like the snake, water, etc. imagined in the rope, the desert, etc. This imagination is due to ignorance of the true nature of Ātman, which in reality is free from characteristics and differentiation. Śaṅkara does not make any attempt to explain verses 20-28, since it serves no useful purpose to discuss meaningless fancies.

*Gauḍapāda sums up the above theories and gives his own explanation regarding them:*

## 29

The disciple grasps only that idea which is presented to him by his teacher. Ātman assumes the form [of what is taught] and thus protects the disciple. Absorbed in that idea, he realizes it as Ātman.

GRASPS: Sometimes a qualified teacher realizes the limited intellectual power of the pupil and teaches him only a partial view of Reality. And the pupil, for want of proper discrimination, remains satisfied with it.

IDEA: Prāṇa manifests all ideas and is the highest manifestation of Ātman in the relative universe. It represents Ātman in Its causal aspect. Therefore all the ideas regarding Ātman given in the foregoing verses, and all those that have been left out, are included in prāṇa.

**ABSORBED ETC:** Such a student attains only a partial view of Reality, though he believes that view to be the ultimate. He shuts his eyes to other views. Failing to realize that his idea of Reality, being only a product of the imagination, is in no way different from other ideas, he becomes intolerant. This is a mistake generally committed by fanatics, who do not see that their views have no more validity than those of others. The snake imagined in the rope is not different, as far as the error is concerned, from a stick that may also be imagined in the same rope.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

What will one gain by endless discussion of this kind? Whatever interpretation of Ātman—whether mentioned above or not—is given to the disciple by the teacher, he takes it for Ultimate Reality; he says to himself: "I am that" or "That is mine." Such a conception of Ātman as is explained to the inquirer appears to him as the sole Reality. It protects him and keeps him away from all other ideas. On account of his single-minded devotion to that ideal he attains identity with it.

### 30

Ātman, though non-separate from all these ideas, appears to be separate. He who truly knows this interprets, without any fear, the meaning of the Vedas.

**NON-SEPARATE:** What is falsely superimposed is not really different from the substratum. Thus, to the knower of Truth, prāna and other similar ideas are not different from Ātman, as the snake falsely superimposed upon a rope is truly the same as the rope.

**APPEARS ETC:** The ignorant person regards Ātman as completely other than Its manifestations. To the illumined all that exists is Ātman.

**TRULY KNOWS THIS ETC:** That is to say, through reasoning. (See II. 4.) Even when Ātman is falsely imagined as prāna etc. Its true nature is never affected.

**INTERPRETS ETC:** He interprets the Vedas according to their main divisions. That is to say, he knows that the Upanishads directly lead to the revelation of the non-dual Brahman, whereas the other part, dealing with rituals and sacrifices, describes the phenomenal universe conditioned by the law of causality. "None but the knower of Ātman can understand the true meaning of the Vedas. None but he can derive real benefit from his actions." (*Manusamhitā*.) "A knower of Reality is never a slave of the Vedas. Whatever interpretation he gives to the Vedas is their true meaning." (*Ānandagiri*.)

The phenomenal universe is really non-different from Brahman, because it has no independent existence of its own. The knower of this truth sees everything as Brahman and thus lives without attachment, false fear, or false expectation. He really enjoys the world. One who knows the mirage to be the desert can still see the mirage and enjoy it. The false notion that diversity can exist independent of the substratum of Unity (i.e. Brahman) is the cause of attachment and aversion, of false expectation and false fear.

*The unreality of duality has been demonstrated by reason. It can be established by scriptural evidence as well. A conclusion arrived at can be accepted as valid if it is supported by reasoning, personal experience, and also scriptural evidence (i.e. the experience of illumined persons).*

## 31

As dreams, illusions, and castles in the air are viewed, so is the tangible universe viewed by the wise, well versed in Vedānta.

**DREAMS AND ILLUSIONS:** These are believed to be real by persons who do not know the truth.

**CASTLES IN THE AIR:** "Sometimes a person sees a city in the sky, full of shops, houses, palaces, and localities frequented by men and women. And then it quickly disappears." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.) And this is an illusory phenomenon.

The non-duality of Brahman is the teaching of the Upanishads. Compare: "There is no diversity whatsoever in It" (*Br. Up. IV. iv. 19*); "Indra (the Supreme Lord), through māyā, assumes diverse forms" (*Ri. VI. xlvii. 18*); "In the beginning all this [i.e. the universe] exists as Brahman"; "There is no duality" (*Br. Up. IV. iii. 23*); "When everything has become the Self, then what can one see and by what means will one see it?" (*Br. Up. IV. v. 15*). Diversity is the cause of friction, fear, and suffering. The wise see the manifestations as Brahman.

*The meaning of the chapter is summed up:*

## 32

There is neither dissolution nor creation, none in bondage and none practising disciplines. There is none seeking Liberation and none liberated. This is the absolute truth.



The notion of birth and death, of bondage and spiritual discipline, the desire for Liberation and its attainment—all this belongs to the world of duality, which has already been proved to be unreal. Hence the notions of birth and death, etc. are meaningless from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality. Brahman alone exists and all that is perceived is Brahman.

The following interpretation of this important and profound verse is based upon the commentary of Śāṅkara and its explanation by Āṇandagiri:

When the universe of diversity is realized to be unreal and Ātman alone to be real, it becomes clear that all our dealings, secular or religious (Vedic), pertain to the domain of ignorance. Then we clearly see that there is no destruction; no creation or coming into existence; no bondage, that is to say, no worldly being; no discipleship, that is to say, no one practising disciplines for Liberation; no seeker after Liberation; and none liberated. The gist of this verse is that the state of bondage, discipleship, etc. cannot exist in the absence of creation and destruction. How can it be said that there is neither creation nor destruction? It is because duality never exists at any time. The absence of duality is emphasized by such scriptural passages as: "All this is verily Ātman" (*Br. Up.* II. iv. 6); "Ātman is one and without a second" (*Chh. Up.* VI. ii. 1). Birth and death can be predicated only of what exists and never of what does not exist. Birth and death are never mentioned with reference to the son of a barren woman. That which is non-dual can never be said to be born or destroyed. Birth indicates a previous non-existence, and death, a subsequent non-existence. But the non-dual Ātman is eternal existence. Further, birth and death, implying change, can only be brought about by an external factor which effects the change. But Ātman is one and without a second. That Ātman should be non-dual and at the same time subject to birth and death is a contradiction in terms. It has already been stated that the experiences in the realm of duality, characterized by the activity of prāṇa, mind, etc., are mere illusions of which Ātman is the substratum. The illustration of the snake and the rope has already been given. The imagination characterized by the appearance of the snake is not really produced from the rope nor is it dissolved in the rope. Otherwise, such an illusion would have been experienced by others as well. Though from the empirical standpoint the illusion of the snake is said to be created from the rope, yet such an explanation can be justified only if the illusion is admitted to be a fact. But an illusion disappears when the reality is known; therefore the illusion is not a fact. [This is a refutation of the view of the realists.] Further, the illusion of the snake cannot be produced from the mind alone, because our subjective idea does not correspond to the object existing outside. From the standpoint of Reality the mind itself is unreal and hence cannot produce a new thing. [This is a refutation of the view of the idealists.] Thirdly, the illusion cannot be created jointly from

the mind and the external object (the thing-in-itself). The thing-in-itself, it is assumed, is unknown and unknowable, and beyond the causal law. It cannot create anything. Besides, from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality, both the mind and the external objects are unreal; hence no new entity can be produced by them. Therefore an illusion cannot be said to be created either from the external object or from the mind or from both. As the illusory snake is only a state of the mind, so also is duality. [This is true from the relative standpoint; from the highest standpoint, the illusion, too, is non-existent.] Neither in deep sleep nor in deep meditation, when the mental activities are controlled, is duality perceived. The appearance and disappearance of duality being associated with the states of the mind, duality is purely a product of the imagination. Hence it has been rightly stated that Ultimate Reality is free from birth and death.

*Objection:* If that is so, then the function of the scriptures should be to prove that duality is unreal, and not to establish Non-duality as a positive fact; for the same method cannot refute one position, that is to say, prove a negation, and establish another, that is to say, predicate an affirmation. If duality is refuted and if there is no evidence of the existence of Non-duality, then, as the Buddhist nihilists contend, Ultimate Reality cannot but be a void.

*Reply:* This contention is inconsistent with reason. It has been stated many times that an illusion cannot exist without a substratum. As the rope is the unrelated substratum of the illusory snake, so also Non-duality is the unrelated substratum of illusory duality.

*Objection:* The analogy is irrelevant, for even the rope which is the substratum of the illusory snake is asserted by you to be an imaginary entity.

*Reply:* It is not so; for when the imagined form disappears, the unimagined substratum continues to exist, simply because the substratum is not imagined. [The illustration of the rope and the snake is given only as an analogy which applies to the realm of duality. No exact illustration can be given for Non-duality, since no second entity exists.]

*Objection:* As the substratum of the imagined snake in the rope is unreal, so also the unimagined substratum, that is to say, Non-duality, or Brahman, is unreal.

*Reply:* It cannot be so. In empirical experience the rope is not imagined; it exists even before the illusion of the snake arises. Likewise, Brahman (Non-duality) can never be an object of imagination; It exists even before the illusion of duality arises. Further, no imagination is possible without a subject or perceiver, who must be admitted as prior to the imagined object. Therefore it is unreasonable to say that Non-duality is unreal. [Even if the analysis of the dualistic world leads to the experience of a void or total negation, as the Buddhist nihilists contend, there must be an experiencer

of the negation. If that experiencer is also negated, there must be another experiencer of such negation. If one is faced with a *regressus*, there must be a perceiver of the *regressus*, without which the argument of *regressus ad infinitum* is not possible. Therefore an ultimate substratum or perceiver cannot be denied. This substratum is Brahman, or Ātman, which continues to exist even when all products of the imagination are negated.]

*Objection:* Scripture can be applied only to the realm of duality. It is meaningless with reference to Non-duality. If duality is unreal, then scripture too is unreal. Therefore scripture cannot remove duality and reveal the non-dual Brahman.

*Reply:* This contention is without force. From the relative standpoint duality exists as we perceive it. It is superimposed, through ignorance, upon the non-dual Ātman, as a snake or a stick is superimposed upon a rope. The notions of happiness and unhappiness, knowledge and ignorance, birth and death, corporeality, grossness and subtleness, old age and decay, etc. are superimposed upon Ātman. Through all these relative experiences the reality of Ātman persists as the perceiver. This being so, scripture certainly has no applicability with regard to Ātman, which, being the substratum, is ever self-evident. Scripture cannot directly describe the true nature of the non-dual Ātman. It is of no use to the knower of Ultimate Reality. The purpose of scripture is to accomplish what is not yet accomplished. It does not serve the purpose of evidence if it is used to establish what is self-evident or what has already been established. Though Ātman is by nature pure and non-dual, yet It is not aware of Its true nature on account of such obstacles as the notions of happiness, unhappiness, corporeality, etc. superimposed by ignorance. The purpose of scripture is to remove these illusory notions; thus it serves a negative purpose. This is accomplished when scripture describes Ātman as *Neti, neti*—"Not this, not this." (Br. Up. II. iii. 6.) Thus dissociating from Ātman such adjectives as happy or unhappy, which would make It an object (*vishaya*), scripture indirectly helps to establish It as the eternal subject or substantive. The negation of attributes reveals the real nature of Ātman. The purpose of scripture is to negate all positive characteristics falsely associated with Ātman.

*Non-duality is the highest Bliss.*

Ātman is imagined as the unreal objects [that are perceived to exist] and as Non-duality as well. The objects, too, are imagined in the non-dual Ātman. Therefore Non-duality is Bliss.

**ĀTMAN . . . UNREAL OBJECTS:** This is explained by the illustration of the illusory objects, such as a snake or a stick, which are imagined in a rope. It is the rope alone that is regarded as the snake etc. These objects are unreal because they are of changing nature and also because they are perceived through ignorance. Likewise, Ātman is imagined as prāna, mind, etc. The objects are nothing but activities of the mind. Ātman is free from action. Therefore the knower of Ātman does not see any object, created by the mind, that exists independent of Ātman. He sees Ātman alone. That the objects are imaginary, having Ātman as their substratum, is an explanation from the empirical standpoint.

**AS NON-DUALITY AS WELL:** From the observation of the changing ideas superimposed upon Ātman, one may infer that It is non-dual. The illusion of diversity cannot be explained without a substratum of unity. Therefore the unity of Ātman, thus imagined, is a correlative of diversity and tinged with ignorance. But from the highest standpoint no changing objects exist. All that is perceived is nothing but Ātman. The knower of Ātman realizes Its non-dual nature. Vedānta describes Brahman, or Ātman, as non-dual or as *one and without a second*—not simply as one.

**THE OBJECTS, TOO, ETC:** From the relative standpoint such objects as prāna and mind are said to be imagined *in* Ātman. From the highest standpoint everything—even what is perceived to be imagination—is Ātman. The imaginary snake is nothing but the rope.

**THEREFORE ETC:** It is so because, from the relative standpoint, Non-duality is the substratum of all illusions and also because, from the highest standpoint, It alone exists. Even when the mind moves in the empirical plane, it attains peace by discovering the unity underlying diversity. Unity dispels suspicion and fear. When one regards diversity as possessing an existence independent of Non-duality, then one courts the misery which arises from jealousy, hostility, fear, and the rest. When the seeker attains Non-duality, he enjoys real Bliss, for in that state there exists nothing of which he can be afraid.

The highest teaching of Vedānta is that Brahman alone is real. What the ignorant see as diverse phenomena are nothing but Brahman. As the snake is identical with the rope, and dream-objects with the mind, so the various objects that are perceived to exist are nothing but Brahman. When one perceives the snake as other than the rope, one is afraid of it. This fear is based on ignorance. Similarly, when one sees objects outside Ātman, one feels attracted or repelled by them. The highest Bliss is experienced when one realizes all things to be Ātman. From the standpoint of Reality the phenomenal world—and even the idea that it exists—is nothing but Ātman. Therefore from the highest standpoint there is neither birth nor death.

Nothing can be added to or taken away from Brahman. The knower of Non-duality sees Brahman alone in everything—even in so-called good and evil.

*The nature of diversity is inscrutable. It is something that cannot be described either as real or as unreal.*

## 34

The diversity in the universe does not exist as an entity identical with Ātman, nor does it exist by itself. Neither is it separate from Brahman nor is it non-separate. This is the statement of the wise.

**THE DIVERSITY . . . WITH ĀTMAN:** The changing phenomenal universe cannot exist as a separate entity and at the same time be identical with the unchanging non-dual Ātman; in that case the diversity would become unreal, because Ātman is one and without a second. The illusory snake, which in darkness appears to be other than the rope, is known, with the help of a light, to be the same as the rope. The light does not reveal two separate entities, namely, the snake and the rope, and their identity. It reveals only one thing, namely, the reality of the rope. Likewise, the light of Knowledge reveals only the non-dual Ātman. Diversity, which is taken to be real from the relative standpoint, is realized to be nothing but the non-dual Ātman; it does not exist as one with Ātman.

**NOR . . . BY ITSELF:** The diverse objects, such as prāṇa, the mind, etc., do not really exist as they appear to; they are illusory, like the snake etc. seen in the rope.

**NEITHER . . . SEPARATE:** The notion of separateness is unreal. The universe is not separate from Brahman in the way that a horse is distinct from a buffalo. It is through māyā that one regards the manifold as separate from Brahman.

**NOR . . . NON-SEPARATE:** Because the diverse manifestations are unreal from the standpoint of Brahman. No relationship whatsoever can be established between diversity and the non-dual Ātman.

**THIS . . . WISE:** Because they do not see the reality of multiplicity. The māyā that creates diversity is real for the ignorant, a puzzle to the speculative philosopher, and non-existent to the knower of Truth.

The implication of the text is that not even the slightest trace of diversity can be associated with Ātman. Diversity being the cause of misery, the non-dual Ātman alone is the highest Bliss.

*The Knowledge of Non-duality described above is extolled for the purpose of intensifying the desire of aspirants for its realization:*

## 35

The wise, who are free from attachment, fear, and anger and are well versed in the Vedas, have realized Ātman as devoid of all phantasms and free from the illusion of the manifold, and as non-dual.

**FREE FROM . . . ANGER:** One who seeks Non-duality must, at the outset, practise disciplines comprising discrimination between the Real and the unreal, renunciation of the unreal, and total self-control, and he must cherish an unceasing aspiration for Truth. The practice of disciplines creates the mood for contemplation, through which Non-duality is directly experienced. Mere intellectual knowledge is mediate and indirect. The perception of duality is direct. Only an immediate and direct experience of Non-duality can destroy the illusory notion of duality.

**VEDAS:** That is to say, the true import of the Vedas.

**HAVE REALIZED:** Reality is not unknown and unknowable, as agnostics affirm. It can be directly realized through proper disciplines.

"The Supreme Self can be realized only by sannyāsins who are free from all blemishes and who are well versed in the true meaning of the Upanishads, and not by vain logicians whose minds are clouded by passion and who see truth only in their particular creeds or opinions." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.)

*How does a knower of Ātman behave?*

## 36

Therefore, knowing Ātman as such, fix your attention on Non-duality. Having realized Non-duality, behave in the world like an inert object.

**AS SUCH:** That is to say, as constituting the very stuff of Bliss and Fearlessness, on account of Its being the negation of diversity.

**INERT OBJECT:** The knower of Ātman transcends all codes of human conduct. He is beyond good and evil. But no evil can ever come from him; he radiates only what is good. He acts like an inert object. He is not a reformer in the ordinary sense of the word, yet through his silent influence the evils of society are removed. Realizing Brahman everywhere, he sees



nothing other than Brahman. He does not assume the conscious role of a teacher, nor does he have to manifest supernatural powers to convince others.

*How does a knower of Ātman conduct himself among men?*

37

The illumined sannyāsin does not praise [any deity], does not salute [any superior], and does not perform rites to propitiate departed ancestors. Regarding both body and Ātman as his abode, he remains satisfied with what comes by chance.

DOES NOT PRAISE ETC: Householders who are still interested in material things worship God or respect superior men in society for the fulfilment of their wishes. For the propitiation of departed ancestors they perform ceremonies which are regarded as obligatory duties of householders. The knower of Ātman is not interested in any material enjoyment, here or hereafter. Therefore he does not make any effort to secure them.

REGARDING ETC: When conscious of the outer world, he takes food for the nourishment of the body. At other times Ātman alone is his abode.

REMAINS SATISFIED ETC: He requires only the fewest things to cover his body or satisfy his hunger.

38

Having known the truth regarding what exists internally as also the truth regarding what exists externally, he becomes one with Reality, he exults in Reality, and never deviates from Reality.

HAVING KNOWN ETC: He realizes that both the physical body and the outer world are unreal, like objects seen in a dream. Compare: "The difference being only in a name, arising from speech" (*Chh. Up. VI. i. 5*); "He is the . . . Purusha, uncreated and existing both within and without" (*Mu. Up. II. i. 2*); "It is the true. It is the Self. And That thou art" (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7*).

INTERNALLY: That is to say, the truth regarding internal objects, such as the prāṇas, mind, etc. It refers to the physical man.

EXTERNALLY: Refers to the earth and other physical objects that exist outside.

NEVER DEVIATES ETC: "A person devoid of the true Knowledge of the Self regards the mind as the Self. When the mind is restless he takes



Ātman also to be restless. He becomes physically active. Identifying himself with the body, he says to himself, 'Ah, I am now fallen from Self-Knowledge.' When the mind is concentrated he sometimes thinks he is happy and one with the Self. Then he says, 'Now I am one with the Truth.' But the true knower of the Self never thinks thus. For Ātman is always the same and changeless; it is impossible for Ātman to deviate from Its true nature. The consciousness 'I am Brahman' never leaves the knower of the Self. In other words, he never loses his awareness that he is the real Self." (Śaṅkarāchārya.)

*Here ends the Second Chapter  
of Gauḍapāda's Kārikā,  
known as the Vaitathya Prakaraṇa,  
or Chapter on Illusion.*

# CHAPTER III

## ADVAITA PRAKARANA

*(The Chapter on Non-duality)*

THE JIVA, betaking himself to devotional worship, abides in the manifest Brahman. He thinks that before the creation all was of the same nature as the birthless Reality. Therefore he is said to possess a narrow intellect.

JIVA: The embodied individual.

BETAKING ETC: He practises worship and other devotional exercises in order to attain Liberation. In the first chapter (I. 18.) it has been stated that the notion of the worshipper and the worshipped is illusory since they belong to the realm of duality. No form of worship is compatible with Non-duality.

ABIDES ETC: He takes the manifest Brahman to be real.

MANIFEST BRAHMAN: Brahman manifest in the relative universe. Sometimes It is regarded as the Personal God, sometimes as the World Soul. It is a manifestation of the Absolute in time and space and is called Saguna Brahman or Kārya (Causal) Brahman. From the standpoint of Non-duality the manifestation is unreal; therefore the World Soul, Personal God, etc., too, are ultimately unreal.

BEFORE THE CREATION ETC: That is to say, before the creation there existed a state of perfection, and this perfection was lost during the creation. A similar idea is found in the Christian tradition in the "fall of man." Though the Hindu scriptures contain such an idea, they deny it from the standpoint of Reality. The truth is that when a man regards himself as fallen from the state of perfection and tries to regain that state through spiritual practice, even then he is in reality the non-dual Brahman.

NARROW INTELLECT: He knows only a partial truth. Through ignorance he believes that the non-dual Brahman, like the phenomenal universe, is subject to change and can be limited by time. Compare: "That which cannot be expressed by speech, but by which speech is expressed—That alone know as Brahman, and not that which people here worship." (*Ke. Up. I. 5.*)

A man ignorant of Non-duality practises devotional worship for the purpose of attaining Liberation. He regards himself as a devotee and Brahman as the goal of worship. He further thinks that though at present he is related to the manifest Brahman, after death he will realize the attributeless Brahman. According to him, everything prior to the creation, including himself, was of the same nature as the birthless Brahman. He takes the manifold to be real and believes that through worship it can be transcended after death. But the knower of Brahman sees that birth, death, bondage, spiritual discipline, and the attainment of Liberation all belong to the realm of duality and hence are unreal.

In the discussion of the meaning of AUM it was stated that Ātman is the negation of phenomena, that It is blissful and non-dual. It was also stated in the first chapter (I. 18.) that duality does not exist when Reality is known. Further, in the second chapter the non-existence of duality has been established with the help of the illustrations of dreams, magic, a castle in the air, etc., and also by means of reasoning. The perceptibility and finitude of objects have been given as reasons for their unreality and for the consequent non-existence of duality. In the present chapter Non-duality will be established through reasoning, which will be further supported by experience and scriptural evidence.

*One who is unable to realize the true nature of Brahman, which is both within and without and therefore birthless, believes himself, through ignorance, to be helpless and practises devotions in order to realize Brahman. On account of cherishing such a limited view, he is called narrow-minded. Therefore it will now be said that Brahman has never been subject to any limitation. The narrowness of the mind that sees manifestations and duality has been condemned in the Upanishad. Compare: "When one sees another, one hears another, one knows another—then there is limitation." (Chh. Up VII. xxiv. 1.)*

## 2

Therefore I shall now describe Brahman, which is unborn, the same throughout, and free from narrowness. From this one can understand that Brahman does not [in reality] pass into birth even in the slightest degree, though It appears to be manifest everywhere.

I SHALL NOW ETC: Narrowness of mind, due to ignorance, is destroyed through the Knowledge of Brahman.

UNBORN ETC: An object endowed with parts may be said to be born

by a change or rearrangement of its parts. But Brahman is incorporeal and without parts. Hence It is called ajāti, birthless.

FREE FROM ETC: Brahman is called bhumā, or great.

THOUGH IT ETC: The manifestation, as stated before, is like the appearance of the snake in the rope. The truth is that the rope does not create or become the snake. It is through ignorance that one sees the snake. Similarly, the birthless, causeless, changeless, attributeless Brahman is imagined by the ignorant as creating or becoming the universe.

*That Brahman is birthless and free from limitations is explained by means of an illustration and through reasoning:*

## 3

Ātman, which is like ākāśa (infinite space), is said to be manifested in the form of jīvas, which may be likened to the ākāśas enclosed in pots. The bodies, also, are said to be manifested from Ātman, just as a pot and the like are created out of ākāśa. As regards the manifestation of Ātman this is the illustration.

LIKE ĀKĀŚA: The word is generally translated as space, the first material element to come into existence in the relative universe. It is subtle, partless, and all-pervasive; therefore Ātman is compared to it. From ākāśa evolve the other elements, namely, air, fire, water, and earth. These five elements, becoming gross, create the universe and all material bodies within it.

WHICH . . . POTS: The ākāśa inside a pot is really the same as the all-pervading infinite ākāśa. The former is not created by the latter. One speaks about the space inside the pot and limited by it (ghatākāśa) because the body of the pot appears to limit the infinite space (mahākāśa). Likewise, Ātman does not become or create the jīva, but appears as such on account of the apparent limitation put on It by the body, mind, etc., created by ignorance. Therefore creation or manifestation is not real.

THE BODIES, ALSO, ETC: The material pot exists in ākāśa after being created out of ākāśa. As we have noted, ākāśa is the original element from which the other elements are produced. All material objects are made out of the five elements. Likewise, the non-dual Brahman, in association with māyā, appears as Brahman with attributes, from which evolve the five elements, which, in turn, are the cause of all physical bodies. Therefore all physical bodies are said to be created out of Ātman. But the whole creation is nothing but a product of the imagination, like the snake in the rope. Non-dualistic Vedānta explains the phenomenal universe both by the theory of illusory superimposition and by causation. Brahman, or Pure

Being, appears to have become the universe through māyā; causality operates within the universe.

"When scripture, with a view to enlightening the ignorant, speaks of the creation or manifestation from Ātman, such manifestation—which is regarded as a fact by the ignorant—is explained by the illustration of space and the pot." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.)

## 4

As, on the destruction of the pot etc., the ākāśas enclosed in them merge in the [great] ākāśa, so the jivas merge in Ātman.

As, ON ETC: "As the creation of the ākāśa enclosed in a pot follows the creation of the pot, and as the merging of that ākāśa in the great ākāśa follows the destruction of the pot, so the creation or manifestation of the jiva follows the creation of the aggregate of the body, mind, etc., and the merging of the jiva in the Supreme Self follows the destruction of the aggregate. The meaning is that neither the creation nor the destruction of the jiva is real from the standpoint of the non-dual Ātman, which is the real nature of the jiva." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.)

*The following verse refutes the contention of the dualists, especially the followers of the Sāṃkhya philosophy. According to them, there are many ātmans associated with different bodies; otherwise the birth and death, happiness and unhappiness, bondage and Liberation, of one ātman would affect all individual souls, and further, there would follow a confusion regarding the results of action. That is to say, the action of one individual would affect others who were not responsible for it. There would then not exist any possible relation between action and the result of action, and the law of causality would be rendered futile. The objection is answered:*

## 5

As the dust, smoke, etc. soiling the ākāśa enclosed in a particular pot do not soil the other ākāśas enclosed in other pots, so also the happiness, miseries, etc. of one jiva do not affect other jivas.

The reply to the contention that the multiplicity of Ātman is real is as follows: The non-dualists admit a multiplicity of ātmans in the relative world, and also the happiness, misery, bondage, Liberation, etc. associated with these individuals. But this multiplicity is due to the limitations caused

by the upādhi of the mind, which is the result of ignorance. From the standpoint of Ultimate Reality ignorance and multiplicity do not exist.

As stated above, this verse refutes principally the view of the Sāṃkhya philosophers. According to them, there are two ultimate categories, namely, puruṣa and prakṛiti. The puruṣas or ātmans, devoid of parts and attributes, are of the very nature of consciousness. There are as many puruṣas as there are bodies. Prakṛiti, or nature, non-dual, undifferentiated, insentient, and dull, consists of the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas, which are the principles of serenity, activity, and dullness, respectively. Prakṛiti is activated by the very proximity of the puruṣa. It evolves into the buddhi (intellect), I-consciousness, sense-organs, etc. Sattva, rajas, and tamas, remaining undifferentiated in prakṛiti, become differentiated when it evolves into the buddhi. Happiness, misery, bondage, etc., the result of the three guṇas, become the visible attributes of the buddhi. The puruṣa, through avidyā, reflects upon itself the characteristics of prakṛiti and thus experiences misery, happiness, etc. The example is given of a colourless crystal reflecting the colours of different flowers placed near it. All actions are performed by prakṛiti (owing to the proximity of the puruṣa), but their results are experienced by the puruṣa. Prakṛiti, being insentient, cannot be the experiencer. As long as the puruṣa remains identified with prakṛiti it is bound. But the very enjoyment of material objects ultimately brings about satiety, and the puruṣa detaches itself from prakṛiti and realizes its freedom. Thus prakṛiti is both the cause of bondage and the cause of Liberation, the puruṣa being, in itself, of the very nature of light. According to the followers of Sāṃkhya, the puruṣas, or ātmans, are many; therefore the happiness or misery of one does not affect the others. Non-dualists generally accept the conclusions of Sāṃkhya, but assert that the multiplicity of ātmans conceived by them is due to avidyā. In the empirical world bondage, Liberation, etc. are admitted, but they are denied from the standpoint of Reality. Even Sāṃkhya does not deny that the activities of the ātman in the relative world are the result of avidyā.

*The following objection may be raised: The variety of names, forms, and functions is an indubitable experience in the relative world. This can be explained only if one admits a multiplicity of ātmans, each having a different name and form and performing a different function. The non-duality of Ātman cannot explain this variety. The answer is as follows:*

## 6

Though the diversity of forms, functions, and names of the ākāśas [associated with different receptacles] is admitted, yet this does not

imply any [real] differentiation in ākāśa itself. The same is the conclusion regarding the jivas.

**THOUGH ETC:** In practical experience we find different forms—large and small—of the non-dual ākāśa (space), such as the ākāśa enclosed in a jar, the ākāśa enclosed in a cup, the ākāśa enclosed in a room, etc. Their functions also are different. For instance, the ākāśa in a jar holds water and the ākāśa enclosed in a house serves the purpose of accommodations. Without space (ākāśa) the pot cannot hold water nor can the house be a dwelling-place. The portions of ākāśa enclosed in the pot, jar, etc. are called by different names on account of their association with different upādhis.

**YET ETC:** This multiplicity of names, forms, and functions of the ākāśa is not real, because the ākāśa remains non-dual and undifferentiated. The apparent differentiation is the result of its association with such upādhis as the pot, jar, house, etc.

**THE SAME ETC:** The jivas, or individual ātmans, appear to be different on account of their association with the upādhis of different bodies, minds, etc. The upādhis are unreal because they are changeable. Therefore, from the standpoint of Reality, Ātman is, like ākāśa, one and non-dual.

This explanation of the apparent differentiation in Ātman as being due to avidyā is given only from the empirical standpoint, when one regards the differences as a fact. But from the standpoint of Reality the differences do not exist.

*Why should one not take the differentiations of ākāśa to be real?  
The reply is as follows:*

## 7

As the ākāśa enclosed in a pot is neither an effect nor a part of the [real] ākāśa, so the jiva is neither an effect nor a part of Ātman.

**EFFECT:** The ākāśa enclosed in a pot is not the effect of the real ākāśa in the way that a gold necklace is the effect of gold, or a wave, of the ocean. The necklace and the wave are explained as modifications of the gold and the ocean.

**PART:** As the branch of a tree is a part of the tree.

**SO ETC:** The jiva is really neither a becoming nor a part of Ātman. Jivahood is the result of avidyā, like the illusion of the snake and the rope. From the standpoint of Reality the jiva is nothing but the non-dual Ātman.



*It may be objected that Brahman, or Ātman, is non-dual and ever pure, whereas the jivas are many and contaminated by passion, hate, attachment, etc; therefore Brahman and the jiva cannot be non-different. In reply it is said:*

## 8

Children regard ākāśa as being soiled by dirt; likewise the ignorant regard Ātman as being similarly soiled.

**CHILDREN:** Refers to those who have not yet developed the power of discrimination.

**ĀKĀŚA ETC:** The grey colour of the sky is not the true nature of ākāśa but is caused by such extraneous things as dust and smoke.

**IGNORANT ETC:** Birth, death, happiness, misery, etc. are not the real nature of Ātman. They are the result of Its association, through ignorance, with the upādhis of-body, mind, etc.

A thirsty man, owing to ignorance, sees, in the desert, water with foam and waves. Similarly, embodied beings, owing to desire, see, in the non-dual pure Ātman, attachment, passion, and other blemishes. Desire is the result of ignorance regarding the true nature of Ātman. As the illusory water of the mirage cannot wet a single grain of sand, so all the blemishes falsely attributed to Ātman cannot make It lose Its purity even in the smallest measure. The blemishes that affect the jiva are of five kinds, as described by Patanjali. These are: avidyā, owing to which one regards the body, which is non-Self, as the Self; asmitā, or I-consciousness, on account of which one regards the mind as Ātman; rāga, or attachment; dvesha, or anger, which arises when the desire to possess an object is frustrated; and abhiniveśa, or the fear of death.

*The above meaning is further explained.*

## 9

Ātman, in regard to Its birth and death, Its going and coming [i.e. rebirth], and Its dwelling in different bodies, is not unlike ākāśa.

**ĀKĀŚA:** The ākāśa enclosed in a pot is said to be created when the pot is made, and destroyed when the pot is broken; but the real ākāśa is free from creation and destruction.

The following objection may be made: It is admitted that, after death, the righteous jiva goes to heaven, and the sinful jiva, to hell. After the

experience of happiness or misery they are reborn, and in due course they depart from this world. Now, if the jiva is the non-dual, pure Ātman, then this doctrine of rebirth becomes inconsistent. In reply it is stated: The text says that the diverse experiences of the jiva are the result of avidyā, and therefore are not real.

## 10

All aggregates are produced by Ātman's māyā, as in a dream. No rational argument can be given to establish their reality, whether they are of equal status or whether some are superior [to others].

AGGREGATES: That is to say, the combinations of limbs, bones, etc. that make up physical bodies.

ĀTMAN'S MĀYĀ: If anyone subject to avidyā sees multiplicity, then this avidyā is in the perceiver. It has no objective reality.

DREAM: Dream bodies are created by the ignorance that exists in the sleeping person.

SOME ARE ETC: All aggregates—constituting the bodies of pots or animals or men or gods—are produced by avidyā, like the bodies seen in a dream or conjured up by a magician. This avidyā, or ignorance, is in the perceiver. In other words, from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality these bodies do not exist. In order to establish their reality one may argue that there are some bodies, such as those of the gods, that are superior to others, such as those of birds and beasts, or that the bodies of all created beings are of equal status. But no rational argument can be given regarding their creation or reality, because, as has been repeatedly stated, the very idea of creation, or coming into existence, is the result of avidyā; and with the removal of avidyā the idea of creation also vanishes. Since there is no creation, the bodies have no real existence.

*The reality of the birthless and non-dual Ātman, which has been established through reason, is now further corroborated by the evidence of scripture:*

## 11

The Supreme Self is the self of the five sheaths, such as the physical and the vital, which have been described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. That the Supreme Self is like ākāśa has already been stated.

FIVE SHEATHS: These are the annamayakośa (the gross physical sheath, consisting of such physical parts as head, feet, and hands), the prāna-

mayakośa (the vital sheath, consisting of the five prānas), the manomaya-kośa (the sheath of mind), the vijñānamaya-kośa (the sheath of intellect, which gives rise to the idea of individuality, or I-consciousness), and the ānandamaya-kośa (the sheath of bliss, experienced in deep sleep or aesthetic contemplation, when the notion of ego is transcended). They are called sheaths because, like the sheath of a sword, they conceal Ātman, which is their inmost essence. The sheaths are arranged one inside another, the gross physical sheath being the outermost, and the sheath of bliss, the innermost. They are animated by the presence of Ātman. The aggregate of the body, consisting of the five sheaths, has been created from Ātman through the power of māyā. (For a description of the sheaths see *Tai. Up.* II. 1-5.)

**THE SUPREME SELF:** That is to say, Brahman, described as Truth, Consciousness, and Infinity. Through the power of māyā It projects the different bodies and remains hidden by them.

**LIKE ĀKĀŚA:** See III. 3.

Ātman, or the Self, as described here, cannot be established by the arguments pursued by the logicians, since It is quite different from the ātman about which they speak.

*Further scriptural evidence:*

## 12

The same ākāśa dwells within both the earth and the stomach; likewise, the same Brahman dwells within the pairs described in the Madhu-Brāhmana.

**THE EARTH AND THE STOMACH:** The earth represents the cosmic or supraphysical (adhidaivata), and the stomach, the physical (adhyātma). The same Ātman is the inner essence of both the physical and the supraphysical.

**THE PAIRS ETC:** The Madhu-Brāhmana is the name of a section (II. v.) of the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*. The passage of the Upanishad referred to here begins thus: "The earth is the honey (madhu, effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey (madhu) of the earth. Likewise, the bright, immortal person in the earth and the bright immortal person in the body [are both madhu]. He is indeed the same as the Self—that Immortal, that Brahman, that All." The purpose of this passage is to establish the fact that the Supreme Brahman alone exists in all the pairs of the physical and the supraphysical, or cosmic. This is accomplished by indicating the point or the state where duality vanishes.

*There is no scriptural passage that praises dualism and condemns non-dualism.*

## 13

The identity of the jīva and Ātman is praised by pointing out their non-duality; multiplicity is condemned. Therefore non-dualism alone is free from error.

**PRaised:** Because non-dualism is established both through reason and through scripture, and also because it is conducive to the welfare of all.

**CoNDEMNED:** Compare: "There is no duality" (*Br. Up.* IV. iii. 23); "Fear arises from the awareness of duality" (*Br. Up.* I. iv. 2); "If a man sees the slightest difference [in Ātman], then he is overcome with fear" (*Tai. Up.* II. 7); "He goes from death to death who sees any difference here [in Ātman]" (*Ka. Up.* II. i. 10).

Both the knower of Brahman and the scriptures extol Non-duality and condemn multiplicity. This also accords with reason. But the false views advanced by the logicians are confusing and cannot be accepted as fact.

*It may be contended that the Vedas themselves contain passages declaring the duality, that is to say, the separateness, of the jīva and the Supreme Self. The contention is refuted:*

## 14

The separateness of the jīva and Ātman, which has been declared in the earlier [section of the Upanishads], dealing with the creation, is figurative, because this section states only what will happen in the future. This separateness cannot be the real meaning [of those passages].

**THE SEPARATENESS ETC:** The Karmakānda, or ritual section, of the Vedas describes the creation of the universe and mentions the separateness of the individual soul (jīva) and the Supreme Self (Ātman). This is reiterated in certain passages of the Upanishads. For instance, there are passages that refer to the Supreme Self as endowed with many desires. There are also passages like the following: "He, the Highest, supported the heavens and the earth." (The word *He* in the passage really refers to Hiranyagarbha, or the Cosmic Mind, who is a product of māyā.) Such statements indicate that the Supreme Lord is other than the created universe. In the face of these conflicting statements found in the Upanishads, supporting both the idea of separateness and that of Non-duality, how can

it be asserted that non-dualism alone is the correct conclusion of the Vedas? This is the contention of the opponent.

**FIGURATIVE:** The reply of the non-dualist is that such passages have only a figurative meaning. It is true that the Upanishads contain passages regarding the creation, such as, for instance: "That from which all these beings are produced" (*Tai. Up. III. 1*); "As, from a blazing fire, sparks . . . fly forth" (*Mu. Up. II. i. 1*); "Ākāśa has evolved from that which is Ātman" (*Tai. Up. II. i. 3*); "It saw . . . It created fire" (*Chh. Up. VI. ii. 3*). But the creation thus described is not real from the standpoint of Brahman, or the Absolute. The differentiation between the jiva and Ātman implied in the creation is like the differentiation between the infinite ākāśa and the ākāśa enclosed in a pot. (See III. 3-7.) As already stated, such differentiation is created by upādhis, which themselves are the result of avidyā. The statement regarding creation is made with reference to a future happening. That is to say, when scripture makes such a statement, it takes into consideration the multiplicity regarded as real by those who are still under the influence of avidyā. The true purpose of the Upanishadic passages dealing with the creation and destruction of the universe, and so on, is ultimately to establish the oneness of existence or the non-duality of Brahman. (The Upanishads certainly accept the empirical view of the universe from the relative standpoint. They explain it by stating that Brahman, which is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe, first projects the different material bodies from Its māyā and then enters into all as their living self. This explanation establishes the essential non-difference of the jiva and Brahman.) This is expressed by such well-known passages as: "That thou art" (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7*); "He does not know, who says, 'I am one and he is another'" (*Br. Up. I. iv. 10*). Keeping in view Non-duality, which is finally established, the Upanishads use certain dualistic passages, especially regarding creation, as a concession to the experience of multiplicity common to the unilluminated. Thus they are merely figurative.

This verse of the *Kārikā* may be interpreted in a different way: The non-duality of the jiva and Ātman, explained by such a passage as "He is one and without a second" (*Chh. Up. VI. ii. 1*), exists even before the creation, as referred to in such passages as: "It saw" (*Chh. Up. VI. ii. 3*); "It created fire" (*Chh. Up. VI. ii. 3*). The idea of the creation is the result of ignorance, which is ultimately dispelled by right knowledge. That the passages dealing with the diversity of creation finally lead to the establishment of the non-duality of Ātman is known from such a scriptural passage as: "It is the True. It is the Self. And That thou art." (*Chh. Up. VI. viii. 7*.) Now, if this ultimate Non-duality is kept in view, then the passage supporting the separateness of the jiva and Ātman must be taken in a

figurative sense. In common parlance it is said that the pudding is cooking, even before the pudding is finished.

*All the statements about the creation given in the Upanishads are only means for clarifying the mind so that it may understand that Non-duality is Ultimate Reality.*

## 15

The scriptural statements regarding the creation, using the examples of earth, iron, and sparks, are for the purpose of clarifying the mind. Multiplicity does not [really] exist in any manner.

**THE SCRIPTURAL ETC:** It has already been stated (III. 3, 10.) that the aggregates of body, mind, etc., like dream bodies, are the result of ignorance and that the creation of the different jivas from the non-dual Ātman is like the production of the ākāśas enclosed in a pot, a house, etc. from the infinite ākāśa. This latter instance of creation is the result of upādhis caused by avidyā.

**CLARIFYING THE MIND:** Since the ignorant take the creation and diversity to be real, their minds should be enlightened. The examples of earth, fire, iron, etc. given by the Upanishads to explain the creation serve that purpose. They are not to be taken literally.

**MULTIPLICITY DOES NOT ETC:** Those who hold the empirical view of diversity ultimately realize, through reasoning and the proper understanding of scripture, that the whole idea of the creation and diversity is unreal. The non-dual Ātman neither creates nor becomes the universe. It alone exists.

It may be contended that before the creation the universe may have been non-dual and free from birth, but that after the creation one sees multiplicity in the manifested universe and embodied beings; and further, that the creation as described in the scriptures is real. The reply to this contention is that the scriptural passages dealing with the creation have a quite different meaning. It has already been stated that the physical bodies, which are aggregates, are produced through illusion and that the creation of the universe is like the production of the ākāśa enclosed in a pot. The different created beings are like the portions of ākāśa inside different pots. The scriptural passages dealing with the creation and diversity have the ultimate aim of demonstrating the non-duality of the jiva and Brahman. The illustrations of earth (*Chh. Up. VI. i. 4.*), iron (*Chh. Up. VI. i. 6.*), sparks (*Mu. Up. II. i. 1.*), etc. are given in scripture to explain the creation in order to train the minds of unenlightened seekers to comprehend Non-duality. They serve no other purpose.



The following objection may be raised: It may be true that scripture declares the sole reality and non-duality of Ātman, and the unreality of the phenomenal universe. But scripture also contains such passages as: "O my dear, Ātman alone should be realized" (Br. Up. II. iv. 5.), "He (Ātman) desired," etc. Further, various injunctions have been laid down in scripture regarding the disciplines of people belonging to various castes and stages of life. All this, as well as the dualistic rituals prescribed by the Vedas for householders, seems to contradict the unborn and the non-dual nature of Ātman. The following verse resolves this contradiction and states that the disciplines and duties associated with the various castes and stages of life also ultimately help seekers to realize the same goal, namely, the non-duality of Ātman:

## 16

There are three stages of life, corresponding to the threefold understanding of men: inferior, mediocre, and superior. Scripture, out of compassion, has taught this discipline for the benefit [of the unenlightened].

**THREE STAGES:** The student period (brahmacharya), the householder stage (gārhasthya), and the stage of retirement (vānaprastha). The word stages also implies the three upper castes of Hindu society, whose members alone are entitled to practise the Vedic rituals. (See *Self-Knowledge*, p. 18 ff. and p. 22 ff.)

**INFERIOR ETC:** That people are born with different degrees of understanding is due to the effect of actions performed in their previous lives. Thus they find themselves in different castes. Those who are born with low understanding look upon the manifested universe as real. Mediocre intellects think in terms of causality; they accept the universe as real and regard Brahman as the cause. Superior intellects see the non-dual Brahman alone.

**SCRIPTURE ETC:** The disciplines for the different castes and stages have been laid down for those of inferior and mediocre minds, who uphold the empirical point of view. These minds, on account of inner impurity, believe in diversity. Through proper disciplines their understanding becomes clearer and they can grasp the meaning of Non-duality. Thus the real purpose of caste rules, ritualistic worship, etc. is to train the student in order that he may finally understand the non-duality of the jiva and Brahman. For those who have attained the goal the disciplines are meaningless.

Buddha, in order to emphasize the transcendental nature of Reality, condemned caste, the scriptures, rituals, and so on. It is to the eternal glory of



Śankara that he left them intact and showed how to use them for the attainment of Reality.

*The Knowledge of Non-duality is established through reason and scripture. It alone is the perfect Knowledge. The dualistic views lead to false conclusions. They are fruitful sources of attachment and aversion. Therefore they are condemned.*

## 17

The dualists, firmly clinging to their conclusions, contradict one another. The non-dualists find no conflict with them.

CONTRADICTION ETC: The dualists take relative truths to be Ultimate Reality. Each becomes attached to his own point of view and dislikes the views of his opponents.

THE NON-DUALISTS ETC: Non-dualism alone gives the *rationale* of relative truths. It shows their utility from the relative standpoint. It accepts the usefulness of social disciplines and religious devotions for aspirants. Hence non-dualism cherishes neither like nor dislike for other views. In the course of a man's physical movements his hands or feet may strike any other part of the body; but this does not irritate the body, for the limbs are its integral parts. Likewise, the non-dualist, on account of his knowledge of identity with all diverse objects and thoughts, does not feel angry at the hostile attitude of others; for he knows these so-called others to be his own Self. He realizes the entire world to be the projection of his own thought. His love and compassion are based upon the perception of Non-duality.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The views of the dualists are false for the additional reason that they are fruitful sources of the vices of attachment and aversion. Why is this so? The dualists, following the views of Kapila, Kanāda, Buddha, Jina, etc., hold firmly to the conclusions formulated by their respective schools. They think that the views they hold are alone the ultimate truth, whereas other views are devoid of truth. Therefore they cultivate attachment to their own views and aversion to those of others who are opposed to them. Victims of attachment and aversion, dualists quarrel with one another, the reason being that they adhere to a partial truth as the whole truth. But the view of the non-dualists, with its universal acceptance and the support of the Vedas, does not conflict with any other view. It is thus free from the blemish of attachment and aversion and is the true knowledge.

*How is it that the non-dualist does not conflict with the dualist?*

Since Non-duality is Ultimate Reality, duality is said to be Its effect. The dualist sees duality in both [the Absolute and the relative]. Therefore the non-dualist position does not conflict with the dualist position.

**DUALITY . . . EFFECT:** If duality is perceived to exist, it is the effect of Non-duality. From the ordinary standpoint the cause is different from the effect; otherwise a man cannot distinguish the one from the other. But from a higher standpoint the cause itself becomes the effect. What one calls the effect is only a name, a mere figure of speech; in itself it has no reality. The waves are non-different from the ocean. The ocean alone is real. It is only the name and form that create the difference between the ocean and the waves. Furthermore, it is the activity of the mind that creates the notion of duality. When the mind is at rest, as in deep sleep, in a swoon, or in samādhi, one does not perceive the phenomena of duality. Therefore duality is the effect. The non-dualist does not deny the fact of duality during the state of ignorance; but he denies that it is ultimately real. Consequently, from the standpoint of Reality, the non-dualist does not contradict duality, since the latter is really non-existent.

**IN BOTH:** According to the dualist, duality exists both in the relative and in the Absolute. This is contrary to reason and scripture.

**THEREFORE THE NON-DUALIST ETC:** The non-dualist is like a man riding a spirited elephant, who knows that none can withstand him. If a lunatic, though standing on the ground, thinks that he, too, is on an elephant and challenges the other to drive his beast upon him, the former laughs at him and goes his own way. Likewise, the dualist, knowing only partial truth, thinks that he possesses the whole truth and challenges the non-dualist to refute him. But the non-dualist, secure in his position, laughs at the challenge and bears no ill-will against the other. To a real non-dualist there is no opponent. He is not conscious of another. He regards all as his own Self. (*Adapted from Śankara.*)

*If it be said that duality is the effect of Non-duality, then it can be contended that duality, too, like Non-duality, is the Supreme Reality, for the effect partakes of the nature of the cause.*

The unborn Ātman becomes manifold through māyā, and not otherwise. For if the manifold were real, then the immortal would become mortal.

THROUGH MĀYĀ: The manifestation of the manifold is an appearance due to māyā. It is like the seeing of many moons by a person with diseased eyes, or the seeing of a snake in a rope by a deluded person. The non-dual Ātman has not in any way become the phenomenal universe. Neither a logical necessity nor any inexplicable factor can make the non-dual Ātman become or create diversity. An object endowed with parts may be said to undergo modification by a change or rearrangement of its parts. This is how a material entity, such as clay, changes into a pot or a jar. But Ātman is without parts. Therefore no change is possible in It except through the māyā of the perceiver.

FOR IF ETC: Ātman is unborn, immortal, and changeless. If It became the manifold, then It would become mortal and lose Its immortal and changeless nature. It would be like fire's becoming cold. A thing cannot retain its own nature while undergoing a change. One of the tests of Reality is that it never admits of any change of its innate nature. The non-dual Ātman, being Reality itself, cannot really change into the dual universe. Therefore the idea of creation or modification is false.

## 20

The disputants assert that the unborn entity (Ātman) becomes born. How can one expect that an entity that is birthless and immortal should become mortal?

DISPUTANTS: Refers to the dualistic interpreters of the Upanishads.

UNBORN: That is to say, changeless.

BECOMES BORN: That is to say, changes itself into the manifold universe.

BECOME MORTAL: All created objects are mortal. If the immortal Ātman becomes the manifold, then It must partake of the mortal nature of the manifold. Birth means change. An entity cannot remain changeless while giving birth to another entity.

*It is utterly impossible for a thing to change its inherent nature. Hence the theory that Ātman somehow becomes the universe is fallacious.*

## 21

The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal become immortal. For it is never possible for a thing to change its nature.

In no way is it possible for a thing to reverse its nature, that is to say, to become other than what it is. Fire can never change its nature, which is to be hot.

*It may be contended that Ātman, or Brahman, the cause, is immortal before the creation but subsequent to the creation, when the cause manifests itself as the effect, becomes mortal. Thus unchangeability and change apply to the two states of Brahman. This contention is refuted:*

## 22

How can one who believes that an entity by nature immortal becomes mortal, maintain that the immortal, after passing through change, retains its changeless nature?

BECOMES MORTAL: If the immortal (i.e. Brahman) manifests the universe, then even before the creation it must contain within it the possibility of change. In that event Brahman cannot be called immortal.

AFTER . . . CHANGE: If an entity undergoes change it must be impermanent, because the change implies the destruction of its inherent nature. The so-called Absolute of the dualists is a changeable entity. If Ultimate Reality is mortal, then Liberation, which implies some sort of identification with the Absolute, cannot be an immutable experience.

*It may be contended that those who support the doctrine of ajāti (i.e. the doctrine of non-creation) cannot explain the scriptural passages describing the creation by Brahman. In reply it is said that there are certainly passages in the Upanishads which describe creation; but, as already stated (III. 15-16.), these serve other purposes, namely, the clarification of the understanding regarding Ultimate Reality. Furthermore, when the scriptures differ about a particular point, it is only reason that can make the final decision.*

## 23

Coming into birth may be real or illusory; both views are equally supported by the scriptures. But that view which is supported by the scriptures and corroborated by reason is alone to be accepted, and not the other.

According to Non-dualistic Vedānta, all creations, actual or illusory, are equally unreal. The creation of objects in dreams is called illusory in relation to objects perceived in the waking state. But the objects of the waking

state are also realized 'to be unreal from the standpoint of the non-dual Brahman. Both illusory objects and so-called real objects belong to the realm of phenomena. The purpose of the scriptures is not to establish the creation, real or apparent (*māyik*), but to demonstrate the *ajāti*, or eternal changelessness, of Brahman. The scriptures describe Liberation as the goal of life; but that goal cannot be achieved if the creation is taken to be real.

*An opponent may ask: How can ajāti (the changelessness of Brahman) be the final conclusion of the scriptures? In reply it is said: If the creation were real the existence of diversity would be real. Consequently there should not be any scriptural passages implying the unreality of manifested objects. But there are such passages. Wherever the creation is mentioned in the scriptures, the purpose is to help the seeker to realize ultimately the non-duality of Ātman.*

## 24

From such scriptural passages as, "One does not see any multiplicity in Ātman" [*Ka. Up. II. i. 11.*] and "Indra (the Supreme Lord), through *māyā*, assumes diverse forms" [*Ri. VI. xlvii. 18.*], one knows that Ātman, though ever unborn, appears to have become many only through *māyā*.

ONLY THROUGH MĀYĀ: If the manifold is perceived to exist it is nothing but *māyā*. Birthlessness and creation cannot be predicated of the same object.

Scripture extols the Knowledge of the non-duality of Ātman. Compare: "What delusion, what sorrow, can there be for him who beholds that oneness?" (*Is. Up. 7.*); "He goes from death to death who sees any difference here" (*Ka. Up. II. i. 10.*). The only rational theory about creation, if one sees it, is the doctrine of *māyā*, and not that of modification, or becoming (*parināmavāda*).

## 25

Further, by the negation of the creation, coming into birth is negated. The causality of Brahman is denied by such a statement as "Who can cause It to come into birth?"

NEGATION OF THE CREATION: Compare: "Into a blind darkness they enter who worship only the creation." (*Is. Up. 12.*) See the explanation of this verse given in *The Upanishads* Vol. I, p. 211.

THE CAUSALITY OF BRAHMAN ETC: Compare: "It has not sprung from

anything; nothing has sprung from It." (Ka. Up. I. ii. 18.) The jīva, or individual soul, is the result of ignorance (māyā). Its existence separate from Brahman is perceived on account of ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed the jīva is realized to be nothing but Brahman. Hence it is ignorance that is responsible for the appearance of the jīva, just as it is for the appearance of an illusory snake in a rope. Therefore no one has created either the jīva or the universe. From the standpoint of Reality there is no act of creation. The purport of this verse is that there cannot be any cause of a thing which has been brought into existence only through ignorance and which disappears with the destruction of ignorance. The idea of causality cannot apply to Brahman, or Pure Being. It is accepted simply to explain the objects of the phenomenal world, which are perceived when the real nature of Brahman is veiled by ignorance.

*Scripture first attributes positive characteristics to Brahman, and finally negates them, so as to enable the struggling aspirant to realize the subtle nature of Reality.*

## 26

On account of the incomprehensible nature of Ātman, the scriptural passage "Not this, not this" negates all [dualistic] ideas [attributed to Ātman]. Therefore the birthless Ātman alone exists.

**INCOMPREHENSIBLE:** The nature of Ātman is extremely subtle.

**THE SCRIPTURAL ETC:** The reference is to Br. Up. II. iii. The section begins with the statement: "There are two forms of Brahman, gross and subtle, mortal and immortal, limited and unlimited . . ." It ends thus: "Now, therefore, follows the description [of Brahman]: 'Not this, not this.'" (Br. Up. II. iii. 6.)

**NEGATES ALL ETC:** The usual Vedāntic methods of establishing the non-dual Brahman are called adhyāropa (illusory superimposition) and apavāda (negation). First the manifold universe is explained as illusory superimposition upon Brahman through māyā. (The whole purpose of the Vedāntic cosmology, psychology, ethics, and spiritual discipline is not to prove the ultimate reality of the tangible universe, but to demonstrate the non-duality of Brahman.) Next, what is superimposed through ignorance is refuted by means of discrimination. Finally arises the Knowledge of Brahman, which is one and without a second. Those who at first cannot meditate on the attributeless Brahman are advised to contemplate some of Its characteristics. Thus their minds become pure and one-pointed. At last they are told that Brahman cannot be associated with any word or thought. Thoughts are nothing but states of mind and are therefore changeable and



unreal. One may point out the moon by means of a finger, but one can never see the moon if one's eyes are fixed all the time on the finger.

**THEREFORE ETC:** After attaining the non-dual Ātman one realizes that the attributes previously negated are the same as Ātman, or Brahman. What is negated is the false idea that these can exist independent of Brahman. The snake falsely superimposed upon the rope is nothing but the rope. All that exists is Brahman. To the knower of the Self the universe is Brahman.

*The foregoing verses have established, on the evidence of scripture, the birthlessness and non-duality of Ātman. The same thesis will now be proved by reason. Śankara always maintains a dual position in his philosophy. While arguing with those who accept the Vedas, he quotes scripture and gives a rational and consistent interpretation of it to prove his point. But when he argues with those who do not accept the authority of the Vedas, he proves his point by means of reason.*

## 27

What is ever existent appears to pass into birth through māyā, yet from the standpoint of Reality it does not do so. But he who thinks this passing into birth is real asserts, as a matter of fact, that what is born passes into birth again.

**WHAT IS EVER EXISTENT ETC:** It has already been concluded, on the evidence of scripture, that the birthless and non-dual Ātman is the only Reality and that nothing else is real. The same thing may be proved by the following reasoning: It cannot be contended that the Knowledge of Ātman is unreal simply because Ātman Itself is incomprehensible. The very perception of the universe points to the reality of Ātman. The universe is perceived by all and must have a cause. Without a real magician one cannot see the magic created by him. Likewise, one accepting the creation of the universe as a fact must admit the reality of Ātman, which, like the magician, is the substratum or cause of the universe. In other words, the manifestation of the universe is due to māyā, which inheres in Ātman. As an elephant conjured up by a magician indicates the magician's reality, so also the creation of the universe indicates the reality of Ātman. No creation is possible from a non-existing substratum or cause. It is also not true that the manifested universe is the effect of Ātman. The fact is that the very idea of the creation is māyā. (If one accepts the manifested universe as a fact, the non-dualist speaks of it as the result of māyā, whereas the dualist describes it as the effect of an existing cause.) The first sentence of the text may be



explained in another way. As an existing entity, such as a rope, produces an effect, such as a snake, only through māyā, and not in reality, so the incomprehensible and eternal Ātman is seen to produce an effect, in the form of the universe, only through māyā. No real birth from Ātman can be predicated.

HE WHO ETC: From the standpoint of Reality the birthless Ātman cannot pass into birth. The contention that the unborn is born again, involves a contradiction. If one accepts the reality of the causal law one cannot locate the final cause. If the unborn Ātman is the cause of the universe, then It must have come from another cause, which also must have had a previous cause. This leads to an infinite regress and one never finds an unborn cause. There will thus be an endless past as far as the cause is concerned, and an equally endless future from the standpoint of the effect. Therefore there can be no Liberation (Mukti), which means freedom from the causal chain. Hence it is rational to accept the statement that the unborn and non-dual Ātman—which is the Supreme Reality—does not really create the universe, for the creation is māyā.

*It has been stated in the previous verse that the phenomenal universe, which is perceived to be real, has been created, through māyā, from the ever existent Ātman. There are, however, some people who contend that all objects are unreal and that they have been produced from a non-existent cause. But such a position is untenable.*

## 28

The unreal cannot be born either really or through māyā. For it is not possible for the son of a barren woman to be born either really or through māyā.

There are those who hold that all entities are non-existent and that they are produced from a non-existent cause. But a non-existent entity cannot be produced either in reality or through illusion; for we know nothing like this in our experience. One cannot imagine the birth of the son of a barren woman either in reality or through māyā. Therefore the view of the nihilists, who deny the reality of appearances and consequently of the cause, is untenable.

*That it is possible only for an entity that is real to pass into existence, through māyā, is now stated:*

As in dreams the mind acts through *māyā*, presenting the appearance of duality, so also in the waking state the mind acts through *māyā*, presenting the appearance of duality.

AS IN DREAMS ETC: In dreams one experiences the diversity of the perceiver, the object of perception, and the act of perceiving. This diversity is taken to be real by the dreamer. But in the waking state he realizes that the diverse experiences of the dream state are nothing but the activity of the mind; the diversity of the dream experiences is the result of ignorance on the part of the sleeper.

APPEARANCE OF ETC: That is to say, the appearance of the perceiver and the object of perception. The act of perceiving is also implied.

IN THE WAKING ETC: The diversity experienced in the waking state, like that perceived in dreams, is the activity of the mind, through *māyā*. The mind is superimposed through ignorance upon the non-dual *Ātman*. To the knower of Reality the mind is Brahman, just as to the knower of the rope the illusory snake is the rope, or to the awakened man the dream experience is nothing but the mind.

*It may be contended that the existence of duality has been admitted in the foregoing verse. But the answer is that this duality is only an appearance created by ignorance. The only reality in both the waking and the dream state is the mind, or consciousness, which appears, through ignorance, in the dual form of the perceiver and the perceived.*

There is no doubt that the mind, which is in reality non-dual, appears to be dual in dreams; likewise, there is no doubt that what is non-dual [i.e. *Ātman*] appears to be dual in the waking state.

"In reality the illusory snake is the same as the rope. The mind, too, which is non-dual [as is known in deep sleep or the deepest meditation]—being the same as *Ātman*—appears in a dual form in dreams. Verily, in dreams, such objects of perception as an elephant etc. and their perceivers, such as the eyes, etc., have no existence independent of consciousness (the mind). Similar it is with the waking state. [What is perceived in the waking state is also the activity of the mind.] Consciousness (the mind), which is the ultimate reality, is the common feature of both. [The idea that the

mind is endowed with such characteristics as determination and volition is a false superimposition upon consciousness, that is to say, upon the non-dual Ātman.]” (*Śankarāchārya*.)

*How can it be proved that the mind appears as the multiple objects, like the rope appearing as the snake?*

31

All the multiple objects, comprising the movable and the immovable, are perceived by the mind alone. For duality is never perceived when the mind ceases to act.

ARE PERCEIVED ETC: Diversity is nothing but the mind.

WHEN ETC: In deep sleep or in samādhi.

“The statment [that the mind alone appears as the multiple objects] is made on the basis of an inference following the method of agreement and difference. The proposition is that all this duality, perceived as such by the imagination of the mind, is in reality nothing but the mind. The reason for such an inference is that duality is *perceived* when the mind acts and that it *vanishes* when the mind ceases to act, that is to say, when the activity of the mind is withdrawn into itself [as in samādhi] through the knowledge obtained through discrimination, repeated practice, and renunciation—just as the illusory snake disappears into the rope. Another instance of the withdrawal of the activity of the mind into itself is deep sleep. Hence, on account of the disappearance of duality, it is established that duality is unreal. Thus it is proved that the perception of duality is due to the activity of the mind.” (*Śankarāchārya*.)

*How does the activity of the mind cease?*

32

When the mind, after realizing the knowledge that Ātman alone is real, becomes free from imaginations and therefore does not cognize anything, for want of objects to be cognized, it ceases to be the mind.

THE KNOWLEDGE ETC: Ātman alone is real; all objects, which are only states of the mind, are unreal on account of their changeability and negatability. They are mere names and forms admitted for the purpose of the practical life created by ignorance. Thus they are ultimately unreal. The seeker first learns about the Knowledge of Reality from a teacher and the scriptures.

IT CEASES ETC: The activities of the mind, which create the world of diversity, belong to the empirical realm where alone the duality of subject and object is recognized. But such action is not possible in the realm of the non-dual Ātman, where there exists no consciousness of subject and object. Therefore in that state the mind, which consists of desire, determination, etc., ceases to exist. It becomes identical with Ātman, which is free from all cognitions of duality. Then the mind remains as a mass of consciousness—like fire, free from smoke or crackling sound, when its fuel is consumed.

*If the dual universe is unreal, how then is the Knowledge of Ātman realized?*

## 33

Knowledge (Jñāna), which is unborn and free from imagination, is described [by the wise] as ever inseparable from the knowable. The immutable and birthless Brahman is the goal of knowledge. The birthless is known by the birthless.

KNOWLEDGE: That is to say, Pure Consciousness without any object.

AS EVER INSEPARABLE ETC: Knowledge is the same as Brahman; otherwise knowledge could not tell us what Brahman is. Darkness cannot illumine the sun; only the light of the sun, which is non-different from it, reveals the sun. Compare: "Brahman is Knowledge and Bliss" (Br. Up. III. ix. 28 [7]); "Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Bliss" (Tai. Up. II. 1).

THE BIRTHLESS ETC: Brahman, which is the unchanging mass of Consciousness, does not depend upon any other instrument of knowledge for its revelation. Scripture and the teacher describe to students only what is not Brahman. Reasoning and discipline remove the obstacles, whereupon Brahman, or Consciousness, is revealed by consciousness.

When the knower of Non-duality does any work in the world, which, to the ignorant, implies a knowledge of duality, he knows that the doer, the deed, and the goal are all Brahman. Likewise, to him the knower, knowledge, and the goal of knowledge are all Brahman. All these, being of the same nature as Brahman, are without beginning or end.

*The fruit of Knowledge, that is to say, Liberation, is not indirect, like the happiness one associates with heaven, but direct and immediate, like the inner satisfaction after a happy experience. Knowledge is attained through the control of the mind, which is now described. It has*

already been stated that through the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman the mind becomes tranquil and free from illusions. When duality disappears the mind ceases to act, like fire which has consumed its fuel. The yogis should investigate the behaviour of the mind brought under control through the Knowledge of Reality. It may be contended that in the absence of specific knowledge the mind under control behaves exactly like the mind in deep sleep. If that be so, what then is to be investigated? The objection is answered:

34

One should know the behaviour of the mind which, being endowed with discrimination and free from illusions, is under control. The condition of the mind in deep sleep is not like that but is of a different kind.

THE CONDITION ETC: The mind in deep sleep remains under the spell of the darkness caused by ignorance. Further, it contains potential desires which are the seeds of future worldly activities, later giving rise to many afflictions. Therefore it is quite different from the mind controlled through discrimination and the Knowledge of Non-duality. The fire of Knowledge, in such a mind, burns up ignorance, which contains the seeds of harmful activities.

Rāja-yoga declares that the mind manifests itself in five forms, which are called scattering, darkening, gathering, one-pointed, and concentrated. The active mind is scattered and experiences pleasure or pain. The darkening mind is inert and dull and tends to injure others, as is observed in animals. The gathering mind struggles to centre itself. The one-pointed mind tries to concentrate. And the concentrated mind experiences samādhi. Concentration is attained when the imaging faculty of the mind is controlled through the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman. The mind under control is not inert like the mind in deep sleep. Permeated with the Knowledge of Non-duality, such a mind engages in action which is in harmony with the Knowledge of Ātman. Therefore its activities should be studied.

*The difference between the mental activities of a man in deep sleep and of an illumined person:*

35

The mind is withdrawn in deep sleep, but it is not so when the mind is controlled. The controlled mind is verily the fearless Brahman, the light of whose omniscience is all-pervading.

**DEEP SLEEP:** The mind in deep sleep attains a seedlike condition characterized by undifferentiated unawareness. This is why, when a man awakes from deep sleep, his potential desires again become manifest.

**WHEN THE MIND ETC:** When the mind is controlled through discrimination, it does not attain the seed state, as in deep sleep. The fire of Knowledge destroys the very seeds of desire, which create diversity. Bereft of the idea of the perceiver and the perceived, it becomes one with the non-dual Brahman.

**FEARLESS:** Fear arises in the state of duality.

**ALL-PERVADING:** For the knower of Brahman, Knowledge is never absent. Whether active or absorbed in contemplation, he sees always the non-dual Brahman alone.

*Such is the nature of Brahman that Its knower is untouched by any sense of duty.*

## 36

Brahman is birthless, sleepless, dreamless, nameless, and formless. It is ever effulgent and omniscient. No duty, in any sense, can ever be associated with It.

**BIRTHLESS:** All births are in the realm of ignorance. There is no cause for Brahman to pass into birth; hence Brahman is unborn and exists both within and without.

**SLEEPLESS:** Deep sleep is characterized by non-apprehension of objects. In deep sleep one does not apprehend the true nature of things. But Brahman is omniscient.

**DREAMLESS:** The dream state is characterized by wrong apprehension of objects.

**EVER EFFULGENT:** The presence or absence of light cannot be associated with Brahman. In Brahman light is never absent. When a person is far away from the sun he speaks of day and night, or of sun-up and sun-down. But if one could take one's position on the sun itself, one would not see any such phenomena. The statement that Brahman is unmanifest during the state of ignorance and that It is manifest through Knowledge is made from the relative standpoint.

**NO DUTY . . . CAN ETC:** No action in the sense of duty can be associated with the knower of Brahman. Even the practice of meditation and other disciplines, which are considered duties for the ignorant, has no meaning for him. He never deviates from the awareness that he is of the very nature of purity, knowledge, and freedom.

*The reason for defining Brahman as in the foregoing verse is explained:*

## 37

Ātman is beyond all expression by words, and beyond all acts of the mind. It is great peace, eternal effulgence, and samādhi; It is unmoving and fearless.

By words: Speech is the function of the tongue. Here the word *tongue* includes all the organs of perception and action.

BEYOND . . . WORDS: That is to say, Ātman cannot be known through any of the organs.

GREAT PEACE: Because Ātman is free from distinctions.

EFFULGENCE: Consciousness is the very essence of Ātman.

SAMĀDHI: Ātman is designated as samādhi because It can be realized only through the knowledge arising out of deep concentration; or because the jiva concentrates its mind on Ātman and thereby attains complete identity with It. The knowledge of identity is realized by discrimination and the negation of phenomena.

## 38

Brahman is free from mental activity and hence from all ideas of acceptance or relinquishment. When knowledge is established in Ātman it attains birthlessness and sameness.

ACCEPTANCE ETC: Where there is change or the possibility of change one can imagine acceptance and relinquishment. The sense of the passage is that when a person identifies himself with the non-dual, partless, and changeless Brahman, he goes beyond all scriptural and social injunctions, whether mandatory or prohibitory. These injunctions apply only to the relative world.

KNOWLEDGE . . . ĀTMAN: When the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman is attained all conceptual knowledge disappears.

BIRTHLESSNESS ETC: This statement denotes the supreme state of Non-duality.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The present verse concludes, by means of reasoning and scriptural authority, what was originally stated (III. 2.) as a proposition in the words: "Therefore I shall now describe Brahman, which is unborn, the same throughout, and free from narrowness." Everything other than the Knowledge of Reality, that is to say, Ātman, is narrow and limited. The



*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (III. viii. 10) states: "O Gārgi, he who departs from the world without knowing the Imperishable One is indeed narrow-minded." The purport is that he who realizes this Knowledge becomes established in Brahman and attains the fulfilment of all desires.

*The Knowledge of birthless Non-duality is called asparśa-yoga, that is to say, a yoga not in touch with anything else, because nothing exists [besides Ātman] with which it can come in contact or be related.*

## 39

This yoga, which is not in touch with anything, is hard for yogis in general to attain. They are afraid of it, because they see fear in that which is really fearlessness.

**THIS YOGA, ETC:** The word *yoga*, meaning union, implies the reality of another entity with which union is sought. But the very nature of the non-dual Ātman precludes the existence of anything other than Itself. Therefore this yoga is free from touch or relationship. The Upanishads declare the Knowledge of Ātman to be ever uncontaminated by the touch of good or evil, which are perceived to exist only in the realm of duality.

**YOGIS IN GENERAL:** Refers to yogis unaware of the true significance of Vedānta, whose aim is to attain some sort of trance condition by means of breath-control or other mechanical means.

**ARE AFRAID ETC:** Superficial yogis are afraid of losing their consciousness of individuality, without which no experience of happiness is possible here or hereafter. Such yogis believe in the reality of external objects conducive to happiness. The Vedānta philosophy says that the true nature of the individual self (jīva) is that it is non-different from Brahman. The idea of a separate individuality is due to ignorance.

**FEARLESSNESS:** There is nothing besides Brahman and therefore nothing that can create fear. Fear arises from the consciousness of another.

*The control of the mind as a means to peace and fearlessness is recommended for those, mediocre or inferior in intelligence, who are still practising disciplines and who are ignorant of the non-dual nature of Ātman:*

## 40

Yogis [who are ignorant of Non-duality] depend on the control of the mind for attaining fearlessness, the destruction of misery, Self-Knowledge, and imperishable peace.

**YOGIS:** Refers to those yogis who, too, follow the spiritual path but do not possess the sharp intellect to realize the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman. They regard Ātman as separate from the mind but related to it. Further, they think that the happiness or unhappiness of Ātman is influenced by the mind. For such aspirants the control of the mind is beneficial, because there cannot be any cessation of misery if the mind is active. But when their efforts to control the mind are slightly relaxed, such yogis experience distractions. Thus they do not possess the natural, spontaneous, and effortless peace and fearlessness that a person who sees nothing but Ātman can enjoy.

Those aspirants who admit the separate existence of the mind should learn the methods for its control by the usual disciplines of Yoga described in the two following verses. But the sage illumined by the Knowledge of Non-duality sees that the mind and the sense-organs do not possess any reality independent of Ātman. If anyone speaks of such reality, he regards it as imaginary, like the illusory perception of a snake in a rope. To such a sage the mind and the senses are inseparable from Ātman and hence one has nothing to fear from their activity. He is not interested in the control of the mind. Duality does not exist for him. Hence he is free from misery and fear, and his experience of peace is natural and effortless.

*If the independent reality of the mind is admitted, then the control of the mind is almost impossible.*

## 41

The mind is to be brought under control by undepressed effort; it is like emptying the ocean, drop by drop, with the help of a blade of kuśa grass.

**UNDEPRESSED EFFORT:** The obstacles to the control of the mind are endless. When the aspirant closes his eyes in meditation he sees nothing but darkness, and when he opens his eyes he sees only the phenomenal world. But these obstacles must not depress him.

The Knowledge of Non-duality is the sure road to peace and fearlessness. The worries and restlessness of the mind cannot be got rid of before one has realized that everything is the non-dual Brahman.

*Untiring effort is not enough to bring the mind under control. In addition one should follow the other means which are now stated:*

The mind distracted by desires and enjoyments should be brought under control by proper means; so also the mind enjoying pleasure in inactivity (laya). For the state of inactivity is as harmful as the state of desires.

**SHOULD BE ETC:** The outgoing desires of the mind should be controlled by cultivating the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman. Self-Knowledge is the goal of all spiritual disciplines.

**ENJOYING PLEASURE ETC:** In the state of laya, or mental quietude, the student experiences a kind of peace, like that of deep sleep, owing to the absence of worry following the withdrawal of the mind from external objects. It is a morbid state of mind in which one becomes oblivious of oneself and the world, and is often mistaken for the real samādhi. But this peace is quite different from the peace of Self-Knowledge. Self-Knowledge is the reverse of oblivion; it makes one omniscient. A teacher is of real help in overcoming this obstacle.

**AS HARMFUL ETC:** Because in both states the Knowledge of Ātman is absent. Mere forgetfulness of the outer world and ego, such as one experiences in deep sleep or in a swoon, is not the real criterion of Knowledge. With the help of discrimination between the Real and the unreal, and meditation on the nature of Ātman, one overcomes all obstacles.

The teachers of Vedānta speak of four obstacles the student may face while practising spiritual disciplines. They are called laya, vikshepa, kashāya, and rasāsvāda. Laya is a trance-like condition, a sort of hypnosis. Vikshepa is the distraction caused by material objects. Kashāya is the deep attachment the student suddenly feels for an object experienced long ago. Rasāsvāda is the taste of bliss—temporary in nature—which arises when the student overcomes a particular obstacle or when he experiences certain visions while still on the path. (See *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 104-6.)

*The Vedāntic disciplines for controlling the restless mind:*

Turn back the mind from the enjoyment of desires, remembering that they beget only misery. Do not see the created objects, remembering that all this is the unborn Ātman.

**TURN BACK ETC:** All desires imply duality, which is the result of avidyā. They produce sorrow because all objects of enjoyment are impermanent.

One experiences grief when they disappear and boredom if they remain too long.

**DO NOT SEE ETC:** During the period of discipline the student learns from the scriptures and the teacher that all that is perceived to exist is nothing but the unborn and changeless Ātman, or Brahman. The perception of multiplicity as independent of Brahman is the cause of fear and sorrow.

*Discrimination and detachment are the effective means to the control of the mind.*

## 44

If the mind becomes inactive, arouse it [from laya]; if distracted, make it tranquil. Understand the nature of the mind when it contains the seed of attachment. When the mind has attained sameness, do not disturb it again.

**IF THE MIND ETC:** It is a strong temptation in the aspirant to seek oblivion by inducing in the mind a state of inactivity. Often he is frightened by the immensity of the effort required for Self-Knowledge. He wants a short-cut so as to forget the suffering of life. In order to overcome this obstacle of mental inactivity he is advised to practise discrimination and the Knowledge of Ātman. He must cultivate detachment from this illusory peace, which is a form of *tamas*.

**IF DISTRACTED ETC:** The way to overcome distraction is to dwell constantly on the transitory nature of the objects of desire.

**UNDERSTAND ETC:** Attachment is another obstacle. Śankara explains this obstacle as an intermediate state of the mind: The mind is neither inactive nor attached to worldly objects, but it is without Self-Knowledge; it still contains the seed of attachment both to desire for enjoyment and to inactivity. The yogi should understand the real nature of such a state of mind and extricate it from this pitfall. For this purpose discrimination is the effective discipline.

**WHEN THE MIND ETC:** After the mind has been detached from the happiness experienced in laya, or inactivity, it may still want to pursue desires. The yogi should withdraw it from objects and establish it in sameness. While on the way to the realization of sameness, it should not be disturbed, that is to say, turned to external objects.

*The yogi is asked to cultivate detachment even from the happiness that follows the state of samādhi.*

The yogi must not taste the happiness [arising from samādhi]; he should detach himself from it by the exercise of discrimination. If his mind, after attaining steadiness, again seeks external objects, he should make it one with Ātman through great effort.

**HAPPINESS:** Before attaining the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman, the yogi experiences different kinds of happiness associated with different kinds of samādhi. Any happiness related to an external experience is transitory and must be renounced.

**DISCRIMINATION:** All dualistic experiences, whether from an external object or from a mental state, are created by avidyā and therefore must be renounced.

**MAKE IT ETC:** The mind, or consciousness, in its real nature is identical with Ātman.

The temptation to enjoy inner happiness comes to all highly developed yogis. After the attainment of Nirvāṇa, Buddha felt tempted to enjoy its bliss all by himself. But he controlled the desire and dedicated himself to the service of humanity. Ramakrishna often brought his mind down by force, as it were, from the state of samādhi in order to instruct people. Furthermore, he admonished Vivekananda, after the latter had experienced samādhi, to forgo its pleasure and work for others. All three worked for the world, living under the spell of the divinity, immortality, and non-duality of Ātman. Ramakrishna often said that to see the manifold world alone, without being aware of Non-duality, is ignorance (ajñāna); and to realize the One only, and deny multiplicity, is a kind of philosophical knowledge (jñāna); but to see the non-dual Ātman alone in everything, even in what the unillumined call the manifold, is a richer knowledge (vijñāna), the highest Wisdom.

*In the ultimate experience the mind itself is realized as Brahman. The real discipline to achieve it is not to suppress or weaken the mind, but to bring out the mind's real nature through discrimination, detachment, and one-pointedness.*

When the mind does not lapse into inactivity and is not distracted by desires, that is to say, when it remains unshakable and does not give rise to appearances, it verily becomes Brahman.

**UNSHAKABLE:** This steadiness, which has been compared to the un-flickering flame of a candle set in a windless place, is quite different from inactivity. The steady mind sees the non-dual Ātman alone everywhere.

**VERILY BECOMES ETC:** This is the real nature of the mind. The pure mind is the same as Pure Consciousness, or Ātman.

*Now is described the nature of the mind in the state of the highest realization. The whole universe is the manifestation of the mind. He who has realized the mind to be the non-dual Ātman sees the same Ātman everywhere and in everything.*

## 47

This Supreme Bliss abides in the Self. It is peace; it is Liberation; it is birthless and cannot be described in words. It is called the omniscient Brahman, being one with the birthless Self, which is the true object of knowledge.

**ABIDES IN THE SELF:** This Bliss is of the very nature of the Knowledge of the true essence of Ātman.

**CANNOT BE DESCRIBED ETC:** Because it is different from all other experiences.

**BIRTHLESS:** This Bliss is not created, as is sense-pleasure. It exists always but is discovered only by the highest yogi.

**TRUE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE:** For the seeker, Ātman is the goal of knowledge.

The Supreme Bliss is identical with the unborn Brahman. The knower of Brahman describes this Bliss as the omniscient Brahman and finds no difference between it and Brahman.

*Various spiritual disciplines for the control of the mind and the practice of devotions have been described. The meaning of the evolution of forms has been explained by the illustrations of iron, clay, etc. These all apply to the realm of duality. If they are real, then the non-dual Ātman becomes false. If they are unreal, then they are totally meaningless. The following verse suggests that all these descriptions and explanations serve one purpose alone, namely, the ultimate realization of Non-duality. In themselves they have no element of reality.*

No jiva ever comes into existence. There exists no cause that can produce it. The supreme truth is that nothing ever is born.

**JIVA:** The one who is called the doer and the enjoyer. Such a being does not come into existence by any means whatsoever.

**THERE EXISTS NO ETC:** Ātman, being by nature non-dual and birthless, can never be born of a pre-existing cause.

**THE SUPREME TRUTH:** Other truths are relative; they may serve the purpose of discovering the supreme truth, which is that the jiva, as an entity separate from Brahman, never exists.

*Here ends the Third Chapter  
of Gauḍapāda's Kārikā,  
known as the Advaita Prakaraṇa,  
or Chapter on Non-duality.*



## CHAPTER IV

### ALĀTAŚĀNTI PRAKARANA

(The Chapter on the Quenching of the Fire-brand)

I BOW TO THE BEST among men, who, by means of knowledge, which is like ākāśa and which is non-different from the goal of knowledge, realized the nature of the jivas (dharma), which, too, are like ākāśa.

**BEST ETC:** The author salutes Nārāyaṇa, the Great Spirit, who is worshipped at the shrine of Badarikāśrama, in the Himālayas, as Nara-Nārāyaṇa, God-Man. The Hindu philosophers begin their treatises by seeking the blessings of the Lord for the successful completion of their work. According to tradition Gauḍapāda practised austerities at Badarikāśrama and worshipped the Lord in His human form, who revealed to him the Knowledge of Non-duality. The Lord Himself is thus the promulgator of this Knowledge.

**KNOWLEDGE, WHICH IS ETC:** Knowledge resembles ākāśa but is superior to it. Ākāśa, the first element to be evolved from Brahman, is a subtle form of matter. But Knowledge is entirely non-material. The point of similarity is their all-pervasiveness.

**NON-DIFFERENT . . . KNOWLEDGE:** Knowledge is identical with the jiva; the realization of this identity is the goal of knowledge. The knowledge itself is in reality Brahman. Knowledge and its objective are like fire and its heat, the sun and its light. The knower, knowledge, and the end of knowledge are all one. If knowledge were intrinsically different from the jiva or Brahman, then one could never know their true nature.

**JIVAS:** The word in the Sanskrit text is *dharmān*, which is the plural of *dharma*. This word means, literally, attribute. According to Vedānta attribute and substance are non-different. Hence the dharma is the same as Brahman and the jiva. In the text, therefore, Gauḍapāda uses the word *dharma* to denote the jiva. The plural number is used on account of the multiplicity of the jivas, which is admitted from the empirical standpoint.

**LIKE ĀKĀŚA:** The jiva, in its true nature, is all-pervading, like ākāśa. The jiva and Brahman and the knowledge by which they are known are identical.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

The first chapter, that is to say, the *Māndukya Upanishad* proper, declared the reality of Non-duality on scriptural evidence through the explanation of AUM. The second chapter established the same truth with the help of reason and scripture (scripture supporting what was proved by reason), by demonstrating the unreality of the distinctions implied by the external objects of experience. The third chapter, dealing with Non-duality, established it directly, on the authority of reason and scripture, and concluded with the statement: "The supreme truth is that nothing ever is born." The Knowledge of Non-duality, which alone is the real import of the Vedas, is challenged by the dualists and by the nihilists of the well-known Buddhist school. But the teachings of these schools contradict each other and their followers' reasoning is vitiated by the blemishes of attachment to their own opinion and aversion for that of others. Hence the knowledge they claim is false knowledge. The philosophy of non-dualism is true philosophy because it is free from these blemishes. (Two of the tests of Reality are that it must be free from contradiction and conflict and must be conducive to the welfare of all. Ultimate Reality is that by the knowing of which everything can be known. The Knowledge of Non-duality satisfies these conditions.) The purpose of the present chapter, called *Alātaśānti*, or the Quenching of the Fire-brand, is to bring to a conclusion the discussion of the philosophy of non-dualism. This is done by showing in detail that other systems, on account of the mutual contradictions inherent in them, cannot be called true philosophy. The method followed is called the method of disagreement, or *avitanyāya*. (This is one of the processes of inference, the other being known as the method of agreement. The second chapter, following the method of agreement, has shown that what is caused or brought into existence is unreal. In the present chapter it will be shown that what is not unreal is also not caused.)

*Now the salutation is made to the yoga taught by the philosophy of non-dualism.*

## 2

I bow to the yoga known as *asparśa*, taught in the scriptures, which promotes the happiness and well-being of all creatures and is free from strife and contradictions.

**ASPARŚA:** This word denotes the yoga which is always and in all respects free from touch (*sparśa*) or relationship with anything whatsoever and is of the same nature as Brahman. It may be said that there is a contradiction involved in the term itself; for the very word *yoga*, meaning contact or union, implies more than one entity, whereas the non-dual Brahman pre-

cludes such contact or union. Gauḍapāda gives the discipline for the attainment of the non-dual Ātman the name of yoga, the word having been used in his time to denote spiritual disciplines in general for the realization of Ultimate Reality. This yoga is said to be identical with Brahman because through it one attains the Knowledge of Brahman.

**PROMOTES ETC:** Certain things, such as enjoyment of desires, promote temporary happiness but are not conducive to a man's ultimate well-being. Again, certain disciplines, such as the practice of austerities and the control of the senses, promote his well-being but are not pleasant. But the yoga described here produces both happiness and well-being. It enables the student to realize Brahman, which is described as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. The nature of Brahman never changes. Duality, implying change and loss, is the root of all misery.

**FREE FROM ETC:** Non-dualism teaches its followers that even those who come to differ with them and contradict their philosophy are really their own self. One cannot look upon one's own self as an enemy and quarrel with it.

*How do the dualists quarrel with one another?*

## 3

Some disputants postulate that only an existing entity can again come into existence, while other disputants, proud of their intellect, postulate that only a non-existing entity can come into existence. Thus they quarrel among themselves.

**SOME DISPUTANTS:** Refers to the Sāṃkhya philosophers, the followers of Kapila. According to them a non-existing entity cannot come into existence and an existing entity cannot disappear into non-existence. That which exists is real and will always remain so, whereas that which is non-existent, like the son of a barren woman, is unreal and will never come into existence. What is called birth is only the remanifestation of the cause in another tangible form, known as the effect. Death is the disappearance of the effect into the cause. Oil exists in an unmanifested form in oil-seed; therefore it can be extracted by pressing the seed. No oil can ever be got by pressing sand, because oil is not present in the sand. One speaks of the creation and destruction of a pot. What do these terms really mean? Clay is transformed into a pot, and the pot disappears into clay. Therefore creation or coming into existence can be predicated of an entity that already exists in some form or other.

**OTHER DISPUTANTS:** Refers to the followers of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophies. Challenging the contention of the Sāṃkhya philosophers, they

ask how one can assert the birth of what already exists. Only an object, like a pot, which has not existed before, can be created or born through the efforts of the potter. If a pot or a cloth already exists, it is meaningless to speak of its creation again. If an object exists, why then should a man make an effort to create it again? The example of the sand not yielding oil really means that the power to produce oil is absent in the sand.

The disputation among the dualists is mentioned here in order to make clear the non-contradictory nature of the non-dualist's position. All dualists believe in the act of creation or evolution.

*What do the disputants really establish by quarrelling among themselves and refuting one another's conclusions?*

## 4

An existing entity cannot [again] come into existence (birth); nor can a non-existing entity come into existence. Thus disputing among themselves, they really establish the non-dualistic view of ajāti (non-creation).

**AN EXISTING ETC:** This is how the followers of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika refute the followers of Sāṃkhya. Their view can be stated thus: A cannot produce B, since A is always A, and B is always B. It may be contended that A plus C can produce B. Even then, C is something that does not exist in A, which is taken to be the cause. Therefore the effect B cannot come out of the cause A.

**NOR CAN A NON-EXISTING ETC:** This is the argument of the Sāṃkhya philosophers against the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika philosophies.

**THUS DISPUTING ETC:** Both parties, in effect, refute the notion of creation. Thus they really support the non-dualistic view of non-creation.

Both theories are based upon causality. But by refuting each other they in fact refute causality itself. For if an existing entity is produced from an existing cause, then there is no real causal relation. Similarly, it is absurd to say that a positive entity can be produced from a non-existing cause. Thus the theory of causality is untenable. All these arguments only establish the non-dualistic position of ajāti.

## 5

We approve the ajāti (non-creation) thus established by them. We have no quarrel with them. Now hear from us about Ultimate Reality, which is free from all disputations.

**WE:** The non-dualists.

**THEM:** The followers of the Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, and Vaiśeṣika systems.

**HEAR FROM US:** The following instruction is addressed to the pupils.

## 6-8

The disputants assert that the unborn entity (Ātman) becomes born. How can one expect that an entity that is birthless and immortal should become mortal?

The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal become immortal. For it is never possible for a thing to change its nature.

How can one who believes that an entity by nature immortal becomes mortal, maintain that the immortal, after passing through change, retains its changeless nature?

These verses, already explained in the foregoing section (III. 20-22.), are repeated here in order to reveal the mutual contradiction of the dualistic philosophers and thus to vindicate the non-dualistic position.

*Even in the relative world the nature of a thing does not undergo any change.*

## 9

By the prakṛiti, or nature, [of a thing] is understood that which, when acquired, becomes the essential part of the thing, that which is its characteristic quality, that which is its inalienable nature from its very birth, that which is not extraneous to it, and that which never ceases to be itself.

**WHEN ACQUIRED ETC:** Refers to certain superhuman powers acquired by yogis. When these powers are acquired in their complete form, they become the very nature of the yogis and are never lost.

**CHARACTERISTIC ETC:** Like the heat of fire or the light of the sun. These characteristics never undergo any change.

**INALIENABLE ETC:** For instance, it is the very nature of a bird to fly and of a fish to swim.

**NOT EXTRANEIOUS ETC:** As with water, whose nature is to flow downward.

The entities in the empirical world from which the examples in the text are drawn are created by avidyā. If even their nature does not undergo

any change, why then should it be otherwise with the immutable Supreme Reality, whose very nature is ajāti, utter non-manifestation?

*What is the inherent nature of Ātman, regarding which the dualistic disputants imagine various changes? What, again, is the harm of such notions?*

## 10

All the jivas are, by their very nature, free from senility and death. But they think they are subject to senility and death, and by the very power of thought they appear to deviate from their true nature.

**SENILITY AND DEATH:** By these two terms are meant all the six changes which are inherent in every physical entity. These are birth, existence (after the entity is born), growth, maturity, senility, and death.

**THEY THINK ETC:** That the jiva is subject to birth and death is a mere hallucination (kalpanā) created by ignorance. Such an idea is taken to be fact only by those who entertain it. By the very power of thinking they project such ideas and regard them as real. Thus the jiva believes that birth, old age, death, etc. belong to its very nature. But all such notions are unreal. They cannot affect the true nature of the jiva, which is the non-dual Ātman even when through ignorance it considers itself to be a phenomenal being subject to birth, death, and other changes.

*If the cause is said to be the eternal and birthless reality, how then can change and birth be predicated of it?*

## 11

The disputant according to whom the cause itself is the effect must maintain that the cause is born as the effect. If it is born, how can it be called birthless? If it is subject to modification, how then can it be said to be eternal?

**THE DISPUTANT ETC:** Refers to the Sāṃkhya philosopher, according to whom prakṛti, or pradhāna (nature), is the cause, which because of the proximity of the puruṣa transforms itself into such effects as mahat (the cosmic mind), ahaṃkāra (I-consciousness), etc. Further, according to him the eternal and birthless prakṛti consists of the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. When the guṇas are in a state of equilibrium prakṛti remains undifferentiated, but when the balance is disturbed by the proximity of the puruṣa, the physical universe comes into existence. Thus creation is nothing but the modification of prakṛti into the tangible universe.



**IF IT IS BORN ETC:** If the cause itself (such as prakṛiti), which is said to be birthless, is born, that is to say, becomes the effect (such as the mind, the ego, etc.), how then can the cause be described as birthless? In a causal series there is no such thing as a first or unborn cause. To say that prakṛiti is unborn and at the same time passes into birth involves a contradiction. (See IV. 13.)

**IF IT IS SUBJECT ETC:** If prakṛiti consists of the three guṇas, that is to say, if it has parts, how then can it be eternal or permanent? That which is composed of parts must, in course of time, undergo decomposition. How can prakṛiti be eternal if even a part of it is affected by change? One never, for instance, sees a jar (composed of parts) that, though broken in one part, is still called permanent or eternal.

The purport of this verse is that a contradiction is obvious in the statement that an entity is partly affected by change and at the same time remains unborn and eternal. Here the Sāṃkhya view is challenged by the followers of the Vaiśeṣika system.

*The following verse shows another contradiction in the contention of the Sāṃkhya philosophers:*

## 12

If, as you say, the effect is non-different from the cause, then the effect too must be unborn. Further, how can the cause be eternal if it is non-different from the effect, which is born?

**THEN THE EFFECT ETC:** According to the Sāṃkhya philosophers the cause and the effect are non-different; and further, the cause is unborn. This certainly involves a contradiction. A thing cannot be an effect and at the same time unborn; for an effect must, by its very definition, be born of a cause. Again, if there is an identity between cause and effect, how can a man distinguish the one from the other?

**FURTHER, HOW ETC:** "If, as the Sāṃkhya philosophers maintain, the cause is identical with the effect, how can the cause, which is non-different from the born effect, be permanent and immutable? It is not possible to imagine that one part of a hen is being cooked and that another part is laying eggs." (*Śaṅkarāchārya*.)

If the identity of cause and effect is maintained, then it may be asked whether the cause is identical with the effect or the effect is identical with the cause. In the former case the effect becomes unborn, and in the latter case the cause is born and thus loses its immutable character. Gaudapāda



avoids all these contradictions and confusions by denying that the cause passes into birth. The only reality is the unborn and non-dual Brahman, which is called the cause by those whose minds still move in the causal plane.

*Furthermore:*

13

There is no illustration to support the view that the effect is born from an unborn cause. Again, if it is said that the effect is produced from a cause which itself is born, then this leads to an infinite regress.

**THERE IS NO ETC:** The Sāṃkhya philosophers maintain that such effects as the mind and the I-consciousness are evolved from the unborn prakṛiti. Gauḍapāda says that this is a theory based upon an inference that lacks an illustration to justify it. Some of the dualistic theologians, too, maintain that the universe has been created from a cause (i.e. God) which itself is without a cause.

**AGAIN, IF ETC:** If the effect is produced from a cause which, in its turn, is the effect of some other cause, then there will be an endless regress and one will never arrive at a cause which is, itself, unborn.

*The two following verses refute the position of the Mimāṃsakas, who affirm that the ritualistic portion of the Vedas gives the true significance of the scriptures. According to them the performer of Vedic sacrifices goes, after death, to heaven, which is man's ultimate goal. They say, further, that birth in a human body is the cause of a man's righteous and unrighteous actions and that those actions, again, are the cause of his future embodiment. This chain of cause and effect is without beginning. It is like the hen-and-egg series, which likewise is without beginning.*

14

How can they who assert that the effect is the cause of the cause, and the cause is the cause of the effect, maintain the beginninglessness of both cause and effect?

**THE EFFECT . . . OF THE CAUSE:** According to the Mimāṃsakas, birth in a human body is the cause of the merit (dharma) and demerit (adharma) a man acquires. Further, a man's merit and demerit are the cause of his

body. Thus the effect (merit and demerit) becomes the cause of the cause (the body).

**THE CAUSE . . . THE EFFECT:** The cause, namely, merit and demerit, is the cause of the effect, namely, the body. Therefore it is seen that according to this view the cause produces the effect and the effect, in its turn, produces the cause.

**MAINTAIN ETC:** It is obvious that, according to the Mimāṃsakas, the cause has its beginning in the effect and the effect has its beginning in the cause. Therefore to assert that the cause and effect are without beginning involves a contradiction.

According to the Mimāṃsakas the cause (i.e. merit and demerit) is produced from the aggregate (i.e. the body, mind, etc.), which itself is an effect. Similarly, the cause (i.e. merit and demerit) is the cause of the effect (i.e. the aggregate). How, contends the non-dualist, can the disputants who maintain this view, namely, that both cause and effect have a beginning on account of their mutual dependence, assert that both cause and effect are beginningless? This position involves a contradiction. The Mimāṃsakas may contend that Ātman has become both the cause and the effect. Therefore, as modifications of Ātman, they may have a beginning; but from the standpoint of the substratum, that is to say, Ātman, the cause and the effect are beginningless. This contention cannot be maintained, since Ātman, which is partless, eternal, and immutable, can be neither a cause nor an effect.

*The contradiction involved in the position of the Mimāṃsakas:*

15

Those who say that the effect is the cause of the cause and that the cause is the cause of the effect maintain, actually, that the creation [takes place] after the manner of the birth of father from son.

The statement that the cause is produced from the effect, which itself is born of the cause, involves the same contradiction as the statement that father is born from son.

*The following verse refutes causality from the standpoint of time:*

16

If causality is asserted, then the order in which cause and effect succeed each other must be stated. If it is said that they appear

simultaneously, then, being like the two horns of an animal, they cannot be mutually related as cause and effect.

If it be contended by the Mimāṃsakas that the contradiction pointed out above is not valid, then they should determine the order in which cause and effect succeed each other. The Mimāṃsakas must show that the cause, which is antecedent, produces the effect, which is subsequent. If, on the other hand, cause and effect arise simultaneously, then they cannot be described as cause and effect, since it is impossible to establish the causal relation between a bull's two horns, which are produced at the same time.

*The very notion of the causal relation is absurd.*

17

The cause that you affirm, cannot be established [as the cause] if it is produced from the effect. How can the cause, which itself is not established, give birth to the effect?

THE CAUSE THAT YOU ETC: A cause cannot be established, that is to say, considered to be existent, if it is produced from an effect which itself (since it must come after the cause) is yet unborn and therefore non-existent.

HOW CAN ETC: If the cause itself is thus proved to be non-existent, like the horns of a hare, how then can it produce the effect? If it cannot produce the effect, how then do you call it a cause? Two things which are mutually dependent upon each other for their coming into existence—and which are proved to be non-existent (like the horns of a hare)—cannot be related as cause and effect. Being non-existent, they cannot have any other relationship, such as that of the container and the contained, substance and attribute, or the like.

This verse reveals that the very idea of the causal relation involves an absurdity. The case for the supporter of causality may be stated thus: The cause and effect are dependent upon each other for their coming into existence. For instance, the idea of dwelling produces a house, and a house produces the idea of dwelling. This contention is refuted in the following manner: The general law of causality is that the cause is antecedent, and the effect, which is dependent upon the cause, is subsequent. If the effect be the cause of the cause, then the cause is admitted to be born of something that is not yet in existence. If the cause is to be produced from a non-existent effect, then the cause itself becomes non-existent. And the cause, itself being non-existent, can only produce an effect which also is non-

existent. Thus both cause and effect become non-existent, like the horns of a hare. Therefore they cannot be regarded as cause and effect, which relationship can subsist only between two entities whose antecedence and subsequence are established.

## 18

If the cause is produced from the effect and if the effect is, again, produced from the cause, which of the two is born first upon which depends the birth of the other?

Though one cannot find a relation between cause and effect, yet it may be contended that cause and effect, even without a causal relation, depend upon each other for their mutual existence. The following is a reply to this contention: Which of the two, the cause or the effect, is antecedent? That is to say, upon the previous existence of which is the subsequent existence of the other dependent? In other words, if both cause and effect are mutually dependent, how can we say that one is prior to the other? If the priority of the one cannot be established, then it cannot be proved that the other is subsequent to it.

*From the foregoing verses one comes to the conclusion that ajāti, or non-creation, is the ultimate truth.*

## 19

The inability to reply [to the question raised above], the ignorance [about the matter], and the impossibility of establishing the order of succession [if the causal relation is admitted] clearly lead the wise to uphold, under all conditions, the doctrine of ajāti, or non-creation.

The dualists (i.e. the Mimāṃsakas), who uphold causality, cannot explain which, of the cause and effect, is antecedent and which is subsequent, both being admitted as mutually dependent. This reveals their ignorance regarding the Knowledge of Reality. Further, the order of succession asserted by them—that the cause comes from the effect and the effect from the cause—is inconsistent. Other dualistic schools, namely, the followers of Sāṃkhya and of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, supporting the evolution of things from existing and non-existing causes respectively, contradict each other, only showing the fallacy of their respective positions. This demonstrates the fallacious nature of the causal relationship itself and leads the wise to the conclusion regarding ajāti, or the non-creation of things.

*The illustration of the seed and sprout is not apposite.*

20

The illustration of the seed and the sprout is something which is yet to be proved. The illustration [i.e. the middle term], which itself is not yet proved, cannot be used for establishing a proposition to be proved.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

*Objection:* Regarding our [i.e. the Mimāṃsaka] causal relation you have raised mere verbal difficulties to show our inconsistency and made a caricature of our position by pointing out its absurdity, as if we spoke of the birth of the father from the son or made our causal relation look like that between the two horns of a bull. We never meant to say that the effect came from a cause that was not already existent, nor the cause from an effect not already established.

*Reply:* What then is your point?

*Objection:* We mean by the causal relation the relation between the seed and the sprout.

*Reply:* But the causal relation existing between the seed and the sprout is itself to be proved. Unless the illustration is proved to be valid, it cannot be used for establishing a proposition.

*Objection:* It is apparent to all that the causal relation of seed and sprout is without beginning.

*Reply:* The beginning of both the antecedents and the consequents must be admitted. As a sprout just produced from a seed had a beginning, so also the seed produced from another sprout (existing in the past) had a beginning. Therefore all sprouts and seeds have a beginning. It is unreasonable to say that either of these is without beginning. The same applies to the argument about the cause and the effect.

*Objection:* We contend that each of the series of seeds and sprouts is without beginning; that is to say, there is a seed series and also a sprout series. From the seed series is produced the sprout series, and vice versa. Likewise, from the cause series is produced the effect series and vice versa.

*Reply:* Not so. Even those who maintain the beginninglessness of the seed and the sprout cannot demonstrate the existence of such things as the seed series and the sprout series apart from the seeds and the sprouts. Likewise, the existence of the cause series and the effect series cannot be demonstrated. Therefore you have not been able to prove the beginninglessness of the cause and the effect. Our objection is not a verbal one. No expert logician will use something which is yet to be established, as the middle term, or illustration, in order to establish the relation between the major and minor terms of a syllogism.

*All this confusion and contradiction regarding causality only proves the non-creation of entities (ajāti).*

## 21

The ignorance regarding the antecedence and the subsequence of cause and effect clearly proves the absence of creation (ajāti). If the jiva (dharma) has really been born, then why can you not point out its antecedent cause?

THE IGNORANCE ETC: It cannot be determined which, of the cause and the effect, is antecedent and which is subsequent. The fact of birth can be established if the order of the succession of cause and effect is established. In the absence of such order there cannot be any birth or creation.

IF ETC: If an entity is said to have been created or produced, its antecedent cause must also be pointed out; for if one sees the effect, one must also see the cause. The relationship of cause and effect—if such a relationship is admitted at all—must be inseparable.

JIVA: The dharma, that is to say, the effect.

One cannot logically determine the cause of an entity that is believed to be born. The whole idea of birth or production is due to avidyā.

*The idea of non-creation is reiterated:*

## 22

Nothing whatsoever is born, either of itself or of another entity. Nothing is ever produced, whether it be being or non-being or both being and non-being.

NOTHING ETC: One can make six possible statements regarding the birth of an entity: It is born either of itself or of another entity or of both. What is born is either an existing entity or a non-existing entity or both. The first sentence of the text refutes the first three alternatives, and the second sentence, the next three. Thus the text establishes the doctrine of ajāti, or non-creation.

EITHER OF ITSELF . . . ENTITY: An entity cannot have been born of itself, that is to say, from its own form, which has not yet come into existence. A jar cannot be the cause of the selfsame jar. Again, an entity cannot have been born of another entity which is other than itself. A jar cannot be produced from another jar or from a piece of cloth. Likewise, an entity cannot have been born both of itself and of another, since that involves a contradiction. A cause cannot, at the same time, combine within it two

contradictory aspects. A jar or a piece of cloth cannot be produced by a combination of a jar and a cloth.

NOTHING IS EVER . . . NON-BEING: If a thing exists, then it cannot be said to have been born. Its very existence is the demonstration of its non-birth. A thing that is non-existent, on the other hand, cannot be said to be born. Its very non-existence is the demonstration of its non-birth. The horns of a hare may be given as an illustration. Finally, a thing which is at the same time both existent and non-existent cannot be born, for no such thing has ever been seen. Therefore it is established that nothing whatsoever is born. The opponent may contend that we all see a son born from a father or a jar produced from clay. In reply Śāṅkara says: "True, we hear people use the word *birth*. And they also have a notion that corresponds to it. They say that a jar is produced from clay and that a son is born from a father. But both the word and the notion corresponding to it are examined by men of discrimination, who wish to ascertain whether or not these are valid. After examining them they come to the conclusion that such entities as a jar or a son, denoted by the words and signified by the notions, are mere verbal expressions. Their coming into existence cannot be proved. Compare: 'By knowing one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only in a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold . . .' (Chh. Up. VI. i. 5.)"

The Buddhist idealists (vijñānavādīs) contend that ideas alone exist; there are no external objects corresponding to them. One idea gives birth to another idea. Cause, birth, and effect are all ideas, and these ideas are momentary. The moment an idea is cognized it vanishes, giving birth to a new idea. Our notions regarding cause, effect, and act of birth are only ideas forming a series. They form a unit. But this contention is also untenable. If one idea is immediately succeeded by another, then the antecedent idea is no longer cognized. In the absence of such cognition no memory is possible. If an idea disappears the moment it comes into existence, the very possibility of experience becomes an absurdity. In the absence of the memory of the antecedent idea it is not possible to establish a causal relation between it and the idea that follows.

*If one admits the beginninglessness of cause and effect, one is forced to admit ajāti, or the absence of birth.*

### 23

The cause cannot be produced from a beginningless effect; nor can the effect be produced from a beginningless cause. That which is without beginning is necessarily free from birth.



**THE CAUSE . . . EFFECT:** A beginningless effect cannot produce a cause; otherwise it cannot itself be an effect. One cannot conceive of a beginningless effect; for an effect, implying a birth, must have a beginning.

**NOR . . . CAUSE:** A beginningless effect, by following its own inherent nature (i.e. without any extraneous cause), cannot be produced from a beginningless cause. If the effect is produced from a beginningless cause, then it loses its inherent nature, that is to say, beginninglessness.

If the cause and the effect, on account of never having been born, are ever free from birth or beginning, they can no longer be called cause and effect; for these are always associated with the idea of birth. Therefore if one accepts the beginninglessness of cause and effect, one must admit their ajāti, or non-creation.

*The realist position affirming the existence of external objects is stated. If the external objects produce subjective ideas, then there is a causal relationship.*

## 24

Subjective knowledge must have an object for its cause; otherwise variety becomes non-existent. Further, from the experience of pain, the existence of external objects, accepted by the dualistic scriptures, must be admitted.

**SUBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE ETC:** The very awareness of such notions as sound, touch, etc. proves the existence of an external cause; otherwise, how are these notions produced in one's mind?

**OTHERWISE ETC:** In the absence of external objects the variety of experiences—touch, colour, etc.—would not be possible. These experiences are universally admitted. Hence objects corresponding to them must exist outside. If it is contended that all that exists is subjective knowledge, then the answer of the dualists is that knowledge has one attribute only, that is to say, the power to illumine or reveal. There cannot be any diversity inherent in knowledge itself which will explain the variety of such experiences as blueness, yellowness, etc. This variety must have different substrata. A white crystal (which may be compared to pure knowledge) cannot reflect different colours unless it comes in contact with external objects possessing those colours. Therefore external objects corresponding to the ideas exist.

**FURTHER, ETC:** The pain caused by burns, cold, etc. is experienced by all. Such pain cannot be felt in the absence of fire etc. Fire exists independent of the knowledge of the experience of the pain. Hence the reality of external objects must be admitted.

This verse gives the views of the dualists, who believe in the reality of external objects. Their argument is as follows: Knowledge is not possible without the contact of an external object. Mental impressions are created by objects existing in the outside world. Besides, the variety of knowledge is not possible if different objects do not exist outside. Furthermore, different experiences give rise to different sensations such as pleasure and pain. These sensations are not possible without external objects. A man may be able to create an idea, but he cannot create pain. The pain of a burn is experienced only when the body comes in contact with fire. Therefore pain and pleasure must have external causes.

*In the three following verses realism, which supports causality, is refuted from the standpoint of Buddhist idealism (vijñānavāda).*

## 25

The dualists, by force of reason, assert that there is a cause of subjective knowledge. But from the standpoint of the true nature of things we assert that the [so-called] cause is, after all, no cause.

BY FORCE ETC: The argument of the dualists is that the diversity of subjective impressions and the experience of pain, pleasure, etc. are not possible without corresponding external objects.

FROM THE STANDPOINT ETC: The Buddhist idealists contend that external objects, such as a jar or a pot, are not the cause or the support of the subjective ideas regarding them. This is because, from the standpoint of Reality, these external objects, associated with names and forms, do not exist. When the true nature of clay is known, one sees that a jar does not exist apart from clay in the way that a horse exists independent of a buffalo. Nor does a piece of cloth exist apart from the threads of which it is woven. Names and forms are only conventions to serve a practical purpose in the world. They are illusory. If the dualists contend that external objects create subjective ideas, they may be asked about the cause of those objects. As they cannot point out the cause, the argument regarding causality fails. For instance, what is the true nature of cloth? It does not exist apart from thread; the latter again does not exist apart from tiny fibres. One may proceed in this manner and go from one cause to another till language or the object denoted by it fails; yet one will never find the cause. Or the phrase *bhūtadarśanād*, here translated as "the true nature of things," may be read as *abhūtadarśanād*, which means "from the unreal nature of experiences." According to this interpretation external objects are not admitted as cause, because they are as unreal as the snake seen in a rope. The snake is a mere idea, due to ignorance, in the mind of the perceiver. The external

world, like the illusory snake, disappears when one attains the Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman. It is one's belief in causality that makes one say that external objects are the cause of subjective ideas. The knower of Ātman, free from this illusory belief, does not see the external world. One does not see it in deep sleep, trance, or when one has attained the Knowledge of Reality. Thus is answered the contention regarding the reality of the causal relationship based upon the awareness of diverse subjective ideas or the experience of pain, pleasure, etc.

The dualists' contention is as follows: External objects must exist, since we are conscious of the diversity of subjective impressions. Further, the experience of pleasure, pain, etc. points to the reality of such objects. The mind may create an idea, but it will not cause pain to itself. The reply of the idealists is as follows: Neither the variety of ideas nor the experience of pain, pleasure, etc. necessarily depends upon the existence of outer objects. One sees objects in dreams and feels sensations in that state; but they are all subjective impressions in the mind of the dreamer. No external object corresponding to the dream experiences exists at that time. One cannot prove the reality of external objects independent of the mind. The subjective impression of a snake, and the consequent feeling of fear or pain, can be produced in the absence of an external snake.

*Therefore:*

26

The mind is not related to [external] objects or to the ideas that appear as such objects. This is so because objects are non-existent and the ideas [that appear as external objects] are not distinct from the mind.

OR . . . OBJECTS: Because the mind, like the dream mind, is identical with its ideas. It is found in the waking state that the mind alone appears as the objects seen in dreams. The mind is identical with these ideas; hence there cannot be any causal relation between them.

THIS IS SO . . . NON-EXISTENT: There cannot be any causal relation between the mind and non-existing objects. The external objects perceived in the waking state are as unreal as dream objects. (See the second chapter of the *Kārikā*.)

It is the mind alone which, as in dreams, appears as external objects, such as a jar or a cloth.

*The idea that the mind can really be subject to delusion is wrong.*

The mind does not enter into the causal relation in any of the three periods of time. How can it ever be subject to delusion, when there is no cause for such delusion?

**THE MIND ETC:** The dualists may raise the following objection: The mind, we admit, creates false ideas of objects (such as the idea of a jar or a pot) in the absence of such objects. Therefore false knowledge exists. But consequently there must exist right knowledge as well, related to or distinguished from false knowledge. (Here an attempt is made to prove the positive existence of avidyā, which causes illusory knowledge.) The idealists refute the contention by the first sentence of the text.

**THREE . . . TIME:** Past, present, and future.

**HOW CAN IT ETC:** If the mind ever came in contact with a real object, then one could speak of right knowledge. And in relation to that right knowledge, the idea of an object like a jar, in the absence of the object, could be called false knowledge. But the mind never does come in contact with an external object which really exists. Hence there is no possibility of the mind's falling into error, when there is no cause for error. In other words, the mind is never subject to illusion. How so? Such indeed is the nature of the mind that it takes the form of a jar, a pot, etc. though in reality such objects do not exist at all. This is what is known as avidyā, or ignorance of the nature of Reality. It is on account of avidyā that the mind, which is the same as the non-dual Ātman, appears to take the form of external objects. But this avidyā is not a correlative of true knowledge. It is an inscrutable metaphysical ignorance which conjures up the existence of external objects. Its cause can neither be asked by the finite mind (which is the result of ignorance) nor be understood by it. To seek the cause of avidyā is the very nature of the ignorant mind, which has not yet been able to free itself from the wrong notion of causality.

*The three foregoing verses (25-27), giving the views of the Buddhist idealists (vijñānavādis), refute the realist theory about the external world. The following verse, while agreeing in part with the idealists, refutes their conclusion.*

Therefore neither the mind nor the objects perceived by the mind are ever born. To see their birth is like seeing the footprints [of birds] in the sky.

The following is adapted from Śaṅkara's commentary:

The Advaitic teacher Gauḍapāda approves of some of the arguments of the Buddhist subjective idealists. The idealists assert that so-called external objects do not exist, being but states of the mind. We too agree with these conclusions, because they are in conformity with our view of Ultimate Reality. (See IV. 25.) Therefore it is right to say that though the mind has never been produced, it appears to have been produced and to be cognized as such. But how can the subjective idealists say that the mind is momentary, non-Self in nature, and filled with misery? Certainly this cannot be known by the mind (as described by them). If the mind is momentary, if the consciousness of one moment is unrelated to that of the next, how, in the absence of an unchanging mind, is it possible to perceive the change of consciousness from one moment to another? Therefore it cannot be asserted that the mind is born every moment and that it is full of misery, etc. The subjective idealists do not admit the existence of an onlooker who can witness the momentary changes as well as the painful nature of the mind. Thus their position is more absurd than that of the realists, and they are therefore caricatured as day-dreamers who profess to see footprints of birds in the sky. But most absurd of all is the position of the Buddhist nihilists, who, in spite of the perception of the tangible world, assert the absolute non-existence of everything, including their own experiences. In the absence of a perceiving consciousness, how could one say that all that exists is a mere void? The nihilists take a position like that of those who claim to compress the whole sky in the palms of their hands.

*The following verse summarizes what has already been stated in the form of a proposition:*

29

The cause [Brahman] from which the birthless mind is asserted [by the dualists] to have been born is itself unborn. [Because Brahman is ever unborn,] therefore it is never possible for It to be other than what It is.

For the reason already stated, it has been established that Brahman is birthless and non-dual. The mind, which is unborn, that is to say, which is Brahman Itself, is imagined by the dualists to have been born of the unborn Brahman through māyā. But if Brahman is unborn by nature, then It cannot give birth to the mind; for it is impossible for a thing to change its inherent nature. Therefore the unborn Brahman cannot cause the birth of anything else.

*Ātman is ever pure, ever free, and ever existent. It is not, as the dualists contend, subject to bondage and Liberation.*

30

If, as the dualists contend, the world is beginningless, then it cannot be non-eternal. Moksha (Liberation) cannot have a beginning and be eternal.

IF ETC: The dualists contend that the phenomenal world, perceived to exist due to the bondage of Ātman, is without beginning and comes to an end with the attainment of Liberation. That is to say, Ātman is bound during the state of ignorance and becomes free with the acquisition of Knowledge. In other words, the bondage of Ātman is real. Gaudapāda says, in reply, that if the world is without beginning, it cannot have an end, and therefore bondage, too, cannot have an end. Hence the liberation of Ātman becomes an impossibility. In ordinary experience there is no instance of an object that has no beginning but has an end. It may be contended that the seed produces the tree, and again, that the tree produces the seed, and that this relationship is without beginning; but the tree-and-seed series can come to an end when the tree dies without leaving a seed. The answer is that we do not see the same tree and seed in the tree-and-seed series. A new tree is born of a seed, and the tree dies leaving a new seed. Therefore both the seed and the tree have a definite beginning. Hence the assertion that the state of bondage has no beginning, but has an end, which has been sought to be corroborated by the example of the tree-and-seed series, is not valid. So it stands to reason that if Liberation begins when the bondage of the world is destroyed, it must come to an end.

MOKSHA ETC: It may be contended that Liberation is not a substance, but a nonentity, like that which follows the destruction of a jar. This nonentity has a beginning but has no end. Likewise, Liberation, which begins on the destruction of bondage, can be eternal. The reply is that this assertion contradicts the opponents' proposition that Liberation has a positive existence from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality. Further, if Liberation is taken to be a nonentity, then it is like the horns of a hare. In that case it can never have a beginning.

*The following two verses have already been explained in the Chapter on Illusion (II. 6-7). They are repeated here in connexion with the discussion regarding the unreality of the universe and also with a view to proving the unreality of Liberation if, as the dualists contend, it has a beginning.*



## 31-32

If a thing is non-existent in the beginning and in the end, it is necessarily non-existent in the present. The objects that we see are really like illusions; still they are regarded as real.

The utility of the objects of waking experience is contradicted in dreams; therefore they are certainly unreal. Both experiences have a beginning and an end.

The following is adapted from Śankara's commentary:

*Objection:* Suppose the state of Liberation has a beginning and an end. What harm is there in that?

*Reply:* If a thing has a beginning and an end, it does not exist in the middle state either. If a man thinks he sees such an existence he is certainly a victim of delusion. The familiar instance is that of a mirage: The water in the mirage has no existence prior to its perception by the deluded man, and it does not exist when the illusion vanishes. Therefore the water of the mirage is not real; it is seen because of the ignorance of the perceiver. If one accepts the idea of Liberation as conceived by the opponent, then it, too, would be non-existent.

*Objection:* But the water of the mirage cannot quench our thirst, whereas Liberation is conducive to man's happiness.

*Reply:* If what the disputant says about Liberation is true, then it is only an illusion and cannot serve any purpose whatsoever. If Liberation (i.e. the Knowledge of Ātman, which is the same as Ātman) has a beginning and an end, then it is like any other experience of dreaming or waking. A man who is starving during the waking state, may fall asleep and dream that he is enjoying a hearty meal. But his dream experience does not serve him any purpose in the waking state. Any experience with a beginning and an end is illusory from the standpoint of Reality.

*The following verse shows that the birthless and non-dual Brahman alone exists:*

## 33

All entities seen in dreams are unreal, because they are perceived inside the body. How is it possible for things that are perceived to exist, really to exist in Brahman, which is indivisible and homogeneous?

ALL ENTITIES ETC: Compare II. 1.

Dream experiences are unreal because they have a beginning and an end, and because they are seen within the body. Waking experiences, too,



have a beginning and an end, and are perceived within the body of Virāt, (Brahman, or Pure Consciousness, associated, through māyā, with the totality of all bodies, is called Virāt.) Therefore from the standpoint of Reality they are unreal. Further, dream experiences are considered unreal because the space associated with such experiences does not correspond to the space within the body. Waking experiences, too, cannot exist in Brahman, which is non-dual and homogeneous Consciousness and contains no room for the existence of objects other than Itself.

*The preceding verse is further explained:*

34

It is not reasonable to think that a dreamer actually goes out in order to experience the objects [seen in the dream], because of the discrepancy of the time involved in such a journey. Nor does he, when awakened, find himself in the places [seen in the dream].

DISCREPANCY ETC: A dream may last only a few minutes but the dreamer may experience events which cover years. Therefore the notions of time and space experienced in dreams are unreal from the waking standpoint.

It is said that, after death, a person may follow a particular path and in course of time attain heaven, where he communes with Brahman. But Brahman transcends time; therefore the notion of realizing It after death is unreal on account of the discrepancy of time. Further, Brahman is homogeneous and all-pervading. Therefore from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality the idea of space associated with the relative world is unreal. Hence, just as the time and space experienced in dreams become unreal in the waking state, so also do the time and space experienced in the waking state become unreal from the standpoint of Brahman.

*Furthermore:*

35

The dreamer, after awaking, realizes the illusoriness of the conversations he had with friends etc. in the dream state. Further, he does not possess in the waking state anything he acquired while dreaming.

ANYTHING ETC: Such as gold, land, a house, etc.

The conversations, discussions, etc. held in a dream become meaningless in the waking state. Similarly, the scriptural and religious discussions etc.

carried on with sages in the waking state become meaningless from the standpoint of Brahman. For all beings are ever free. There is no *real* bondage or ignorance which requires to be removed by religious practices. (See I. 17-18; II. 32.) For the knower of the non-dual and birthless Brahman the study of scripture, the discussions, etc. undertaken in the waking state for the attainment of Knowledge are as unreal as dream experiences. For Ātman is ever free, pure, and illumined; It never *really* falls into bondage. When an illumined person is seen eating, drinking, studying scripture, etc., it should be remembered that these activities are quite different from those of the ignorant, for they are dissociated from the general notion of the subject-object relationship. While performing these actions he is conscious of the non-dual Brahman alone. The aim of the scriptural study, spiritual discipline, etc. undertaken by the ignorant person is to free him from the hypnotic spell which makes him feel that he is *not* Brahman.

*Waking experiences, on account of their similarity to dream experiences, are unreal.*

## 36

The dream body is unsubstantial because the other [i.e. the physical] body, different from it, is perceived. Like the [dream] body, all things cognized by the mind are unsubstantial.

**THE DREAM BODY ETC:** The real body lies motionless in sleep, but the sleeping person dreams that he is walking. Therefore from the standpoint of waking the dream body is unsubstantial. Likewise, from the standpoint of Ultimate Reality the body perceived in the waking state—the body which is sometimes honoured and sometimes insulted—is unsubstantial.

**ALL THINGS ETC:** Dream objects are unsubstantial on account of their being perceived by the mind; the objects perceived in the waking state are equally unsubstantial for the same reason. (See II. 4.)

*For the following reason, also, the objects experienced in the waking state are unreal:*

## 37

Since the experience [of objects] in dreams is similar to the experience [of objects] in the waking state, waking experience is regarded as the cause of dream experience. It is only by him [who admits wak-

ing experience to be the cause of dream experience] that waking experience can be regarded as real.

The following is adapted from Śāṅkara's commentary:

For the following reason, also, the objects perceived in the waking state are unreal: In dreams, as in the waking state, the dreamer sees the subject-object relationship and the operation of causality. For this reason he regards the waking state as the cause of the dream state; that is to say, he regards the dream as the product of waking experience. Since the dream is the private experience of the dreamer, the waking state, which is its cause, should also be his private experience. Therefore the waking state should be real only to the perceiver of the dream, that is to say, to him who takes the dream to be real. The gist of this verse is that it is to the dreamer alone that the dream objects appear to be objects of common experience and therefore real. So, likewise, the experiences of the waking state, which are the cause of the dream, appear to be the common experience of all and therefore real. But the objects perceived in the waking state fall within the experience of the dreamer alone and do not belong to the common experience of all. Therefore waking experiences are like dream experiences.

*It has been said in the previous verse that waking experiences are the cause of the dream experiences: since the latter are unreal, the waking experiences must also be unreal. It may be contended that there exists too glaring a discrepancy between the two states for them to be given the same status. The following verse answers this contention by saying that the very fact of birth or evolution cannot be established. From the standpoint of Ultimate Reality, or the unborn Brahman, all relative experiences are unreal.*

All entities are said to be unborn, since birth cannot be established [as a fact]. It is utterly impossible for the unreal to be born of the real.

**ALL ENTITIES ETC:** To the non-discriminating the waking experiences are surely real. But the wise deny causality and do not see the birth of anything. Creation, or birth, dependent upon causality, cannot be established as a fact. Hence the non-dualists regard all entities as the unborn Ātman. Compare: "He is the . . . Puruṣa, uncreated and existing both within and without." (Mu. Up. II. i. 2.) The wise see everywhere the non-dual Brahman alone.

IT IS ETC: In common experience we never see a real entity producing an unreal one. The birth of a barren woman's son is utterly absurd.

*Objection: You yourself have stated that the dream experiences are produced by the waking experiences. Then how is it that you deny the fact of birth, or production? In answer it is stated:*

39

A man filled with the impressions of the unreal objects seen in the waking state sees those very things in dreams as well. But he does not see in the waking state the unreal objects seen in dreams.

A MAN ETC: A man sees unreal objects in the waking state and is deeply impressed by them. He sees those very objects in dreams as well. But he does not see again in the waking state the unreal objects which he sees in dreams.

In this verse Gaudapāda explains his notion of the causal relationship between waking and dreaming. A man perceives in the waking state objects which are as imaginary as the illusory snake in the rope, but he is deeply impressed by this perception. He takes these objects to be real. Then he falls asleep and sees them in a dream. In that state, too, he sees various imaginary objects characterized by the subject-object relationship. Though fully absorbed in the objects he sees in the dream state, he does not see the selfsame objects in the following waking state. Sometimes he does not see in the dream state what he sees in the waking state. Thus a dependable causal relationship does not exist between dreaming and waking. But because one generally sees in dreams what one sees in the waking state, the waking state is said to be the cause of the dream. The truth is that the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are falsely superimposed upon Ātman. To the illumined they are the same as the non-dual and birthless Ātman.

*Causality in any shape or form is denied from the standpoint of Reality:*

40

The unreal cannot have another unreality for its cause, nor can the real have the unreal for its cause. The real cannot be the cause of the real. And how utterly impossible it is for the real to be the cause of the unreal!

**THE UNREAL ETC:** This is a refutation of the theory of the Buddhist nihilists, according to whom the unreal universe has been produced from an unreal entity called the void. An unreal entity, like the horns of a hare, cannot be produced from another unreal entity, like a castle in the air.

**NOR CAN THE REAL ETC:** This is a refutation of the Nyāya theory that an existing thing can be produced from a previous non-existence.

**THE REAL ETC:** This refutes the Sāṃkhya theory that an existing cause (such as prakṛiti) can produce an existing effect (such as the universe).

**HOW UTTERLY ETC:** This refutes the theory of a certain class of Vedāntists, who say that Brahman is the cause of the illusory phenomena.

All of the four schools refuted above accept causality in some form or other. From the standpoint of Reality there can be no causal relationship whatsoever between entities.

*The following verse states that there is no causal relationship whatsoever between the waking and the dream state, though both are unreal.*

## 41

As a person in the waking state through false knowledge appears to handle objects, whose nature is inscrutable, [as if they were real,] so also, in dreams, he perceives, through false knowledge, objects whose existence is possible in the dream state alone.

**AS A PERSON ETC:** It has already been stated that the objects seen in the waking state are unreal, like the illusory snake perceived in the rope. The nature of these objects conjured up by māyā is inscrutable. They cannot be called real, because they are subject to change. But one cannot say that they are unreal, like the son of a barren woman, because they appear to exist. Therefore sense-objects cannot be described either as real or as unreal. This very inscrutability is characteristic of māyā. The only substance about which there cannot possibly exist any doubt or misgiving is Ātman.

**SO ALSO ETC:** The objects seen in dreams, such as an elephant or a house, are equally inscrutable. The sleeping person perceives them because he is bereft of discrimination. Their existence is peculiar to that condition alone. They are not the effect of waking experiences.

*The idea of causality taught in scripture is a concession to human weakness. Brahman is described as the cause of the universe so that*

*students of dull or mediocre intellect may understand the Supreme Reality with the help of causal arguments.*

## 42

Wise men teach causality only for the sake of those who, afraid of non-creation, assert the reality of [external] objects because they perceive such objects and also because they cling to various social and religious duties.

WISE MEN: That is to say, non-dualistic Vedāntists.

WHO . . . ASSERT ETC: Multiplicity cannot be established either by reason or from scriptural evidence. It is the result of ignorance.

SOCIAL ETC: Namely, the duties pertaining to the four castes and the various stages of life.

Men of mediocre or dull intellect take the apparent world to be real. They are attached to their individuality. Further, they follow various social and religious observances in order to enjoy happiness here and hereafter, since they are believers in causality. It is for the benefit of such people that non-dualistic seers teach causality and speak of Brahman as the cause of the universe. Through constant study of scripture and practice of meditation and self-control they gradually come to understand that the effect (i.e. the universe) cannot possess a reality independent of the cause (i.e. Brahman) and that the universe is, in reality, Brahman. It has already been said that the scriptural statements regarding creation are meant as a help for mediocre pupils' higher understanding of Reality. (See III. 15.) For such pupils creation, causality, etc. are described in the beginning; but in the end all these notions are refuted. It is like erecting a scaffold to repair the top of a building and then removing it when the task is finished.

*Recognizing the necessity of different religious practices for diverse temperaments, non-dualists do not condemn earnest and sincere dualistic worshippers.*

## 43

Those who, because of their fear of the truth of absolute non-creation and also because of their perception [of external objects], deny ajāti (non-creation) are not affected by the evil consequent on the belief in creation. This evil, if there is any, is insignificant.

ARE NOT ETC: A sincere dualistic worshipper endowed with faith in his ideal and devoted to the path of righteousness must not be condemned. He is not committing any sin. He too tries to follow the path of discrimination. He is frightened by the very idea of the non-dual Brahman and shrinks from the truth regarding non-creation because in his present state of mind he cannot ignore the external world and also because he is attached to the various social and religious duties. Therefore, even though a slight blemish attaches to his belief and conduct, it is not serious. It is the result of his not yet having realized Ultimate Reality. In the end he overcomes all obstacles and realizes the truth of non-creation.

This verse shows the catholicity of Non-dualistic Vedānta.

*A person may see an external object. He may also believe that he can deal with it in some way or other. But this does not prove that the object is real. In other words, mere sense-perception and the fulfilment of a purpose are not convincing tests of reality.*

## 44

As an elephant conjured up by a magician is taken to be real because it is perceived to exist and also because it answers to the behaviour [of a real elephant], so also [external] objects are taken to be real because they are perceived to exist and because one can deal with them.

IT ANSWERS ETC: The spectator sees that the illusory elephant is tied with a rope, is fed with grass, and can be mounted.

ONE CAN ETC: External objects serve the practical purposes of life.

It is the business of the true philosopher to find out if the object perceived to exist is genuine and if its so-called usefulness is real.

*What is Ultimate Reality?*

## 45

It is Consciousness, Vijnāna, alone that appears to be born or to move or to take the form of matter. But this Consciousness is really ever unborn, immovable, and free from the traits of materiality; it is all peace and non-dual.

CONSCIOUSNESS: That is to say, the mind free from the notion of causality created by māyā. It is the same as the non-dual Ātman.



Though Ultimate Reality is ever unborn, yet it appears to be born. For example, we say that a man called Devadatta is born. Likewise we say that Devadatta is moving and that he is fair and tall. What is that entity which is the Ground or substratum of all these descriptions? It is Pure Consciousness, or Ātman, which is really free from birth and all other changes. From the standpoint of Reality it cannot even be called the substratum; for nothing whatsoever exists in relation to which Ātman may be called the substratum. It is described in this way only from the relative standpoint.

*Brahman, which is the inmost Consciousness of living beings, is birthless.*

## 46

Thus the mind is never subject to birth. All beings, too, are free from birth. Those who know this do not fall into false knowledge.

MIND: That is to say, Brahman, or Pure Consciousness.

ALL BEINGS: Ultimate Reality cannot be said to be one or many, which are correlatives applying to the categories of the phenomenal world. The word *beings* (dharmāḥ) is metaphorically used in the plural because of the perception of variety, which is, in reality, the illusory appearance of the non-dual Ātman as different corporeal entities.

THOSE ETC: The knower of Reality does not wander in the darkness of avidyā and hanker after unreal things.

The purport of the text is that all that exists is Brahman. The multiplicity seen by the unilluminated and regarded by them as separate from Brahman, is nothing but the non-dual Brahman. It is the non-dual Brahman that is perceived as the objects of the waking state, the ideas of the dream state, and the undifferentiated consciousness of deep sleep.

*It is the birthless and immutable Consciousness that appears to be born or to move. This is described by the illustration of a fire-brand:*

## 47

As [the line made by] a moving fire-brand appears to be straight, crooked, etc., so Consciousness, when set in motion, appears as the perceiver, the perceived, and the like.

AS ETC: If a fire-brand is moved swiftly it makes a circle, a straight line, or a crooked line according to the movement of the hand. The fire burning at the end of the stick appears to have assumed various forms.

So ETC: When Consciousness is set in motion, such illusory phenomena as the subject and the object are perceived. In reality, however, there is no motion in Consciousness; it only appears to be moving. This apparent motion is due to ignorance.

*That Consciousness is all peace is described by an illustration:*

48

As the fire-brand, when not in motion, is free from all appearances and remains changeless, so Consciousness, when not in motion, is free from all appearances and remains changeless.

So CONSCIOUSNESS ETC: As already stated, the idea of motion is attributed to Consciousness through avidyā. There are two powers of avidyā: the veiling-power and the projecting-power. The first conceals the true nature of Reality, and the second creates various forms.

No figure is seen when the fire-brand is not moved. Even when moved, the fire is only a point at the end of the stick. The different figures seen at that time are mere appearances. Similarly, even during the state of ignorance no change takes place in Consciousness.

49

When the fire-brand is set in motion, the appearances [that are seen in it] do not come from elsewhere. When it is still, the appearances do not leave the motionless fire-brand and go elsewhere, nor do they enter into the fire-brand itself.

Since the various forms seen when the fire-brand is moved are illusory, one cannot truly speak of their origination and disappearance, and the like.

*Furthermore:*

50

The appearances do not emerge from the fire-brand, because their nature is not that of a substance. This applies likewise to Consciousness, because of the similarity of the appearances.

THE APPEARANCES ETC: The appearances do not come out of the fire-brand, like something coming out of a house. The reason is that they are not substances; they are unreal.

BECAUSE OF ETC: In both instances the appearances are the result of the ignorance of the perceiver.

Birth, change, death, etc. have no real existence. They are illusory, having been created by avidyā.

*How is it that the appearances are similar?*

51-52

When Consciousness is associated with [the idea of] activity, [as in the waking and dream states,] the appearances [that seem to arise] do not come from anywhere else. When Consciousness is non-active, [as in deep sleep,] the appearances do not leave the non-active Consciousness and go elsewhere, nor do they merge in it. The appearances do not emerge from Consciousness, for their nature is not that of a substance. They are incomprehensible, because they are not subject to the relation of cause and effect.

APPEARANCES [THAT SEEM TO ARISE]: Such as birth, change, death, etc.

DO NOT COME ETC: That is to say, they are not produced from an outside cause.

NOR DO THEY MERGE ETC: Because their nature is not that of a substance.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE: The ordinary mind can think of an object only through the causal or some other relationship. The objects seen in the waking and dream states cannot be said to be unreal or non-existent, because they are perceived. Nor can they be said to be real or existent, because they are not perceived in deep sleep. Therefore it is impossible to know their true nature. This is māyā. As already stated, māyā, or appearance, is real to the ignorant; to the intellectual philosopher it is a puzzle; and to the illumined soul it is non-existent.

When Consciousness appears to be active, as in the waking and dream states, various forms are cognized. But they do not come from outside; for nothing is seen to exist outside Consciousness. Again, when Consciousness remains non-active, as in deep sleep, the forms do not leave Consciousness (by which they are perceived during the waking and dream states) and go elsewhere. No one is ever aware of such a happening. Further, the forms do not enter into Consciousness itself in deep sleep. Consciousness is non-dual and beyond the idea of time and space; therefore the objects existing in time and space can neither be produced from it nor merge in it. Further, being unreal, they can have no relationship with Consciousness.

The fire-brand and Consciousness are alike, the only special feature of Consciousness being its immutability.

The purport of the verse is this: As the fire-brand (which is merely a point) is associated with forms—straight or crooked—though in reality such straight or crooked forms are ever non-existent, so Pure Consciousness is associated with the ideas of birth, death, etc. though such ideas are ever non-existent. Hence these ideas of birth, death, etc. are illusory.

*Ātman, being other than substance or attributes, cannot be either the cause or the effect.*

## 53

A substance may be the cause of another substance, and a non-substance, the cause of another non-substance. But the jivas cannot possibly be anything like a substance or a non-substance.

**SUBSTANCE:** That is to say, entity endowed with parts.

**A SUBSTANCE MAY ETC:** It has already been established that Ātman, in its real nature, is non-dual, unborn, free from attributes, and free from parts. Those who imagine the causal relation in Ātman must admit that only a substance can be the cause of another substance, and only that which is other than a substance can be the cause of something else which is other than a substance. No one finds, in common experience, a non-substance, by itself, to be the cause of something other than a non-substance. The jivas, being devoid of parts, cannot be called either substances or non-substances. Hence they cannot be the cause or effect of anything.

**NON-SUBSTANCE:** That is to say, attribute.

Ātman is without parts; hence It cannot be called a material substance. It is not an attribute, because no one can conceive of attributes, such as colour or form, without a substance. Therefore Ātman is free from causality.

## 54

Thus external appearances (objects) are not caused by the mind, nor is the mind caused by them. Hence thoughtful people hold to the principle of absolute non-creation.

**THUS ETC:** The nature of Ātman is not that of an empirical substance; it is free from all change. Therefore it is free from the notion of causality. The popular belief is that the idea of a pot in the potter's mind is the cause of the pot, and that a material pot, existing outside, gives rise to the idea